

Our Time





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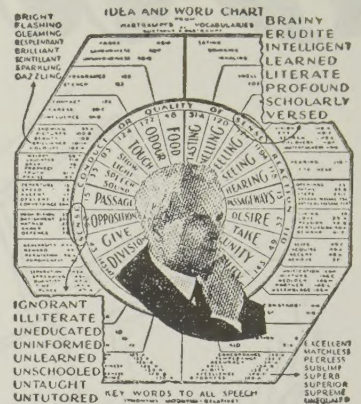
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Our Time

INCORPORATING POETRY AND THE PEOPLE

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Standards of Living

WE ARE OFTEN BEING ASKED : " WHAT SORT of audience are you really addressing ? Who is your magazine intended for ? " In that question itself, there seem to us to be two kinds of prejudice implicit. First, that a magazine devoted to literature and the arts must necessarily be a specialised one, that only a small section of the population are interested in these things. And second, that the range of this interest will always remain limited, there will always be a great gulf fixed between the "cultured" and the "uncultured."

There was a time, indeed, when "cultivated" was a word which went with rich and leisured. When a literary magazine circulated within an enclosed ring of some five thousand readers. But those days are gone. From the cradle to the grave, we are all subjected every day of our lives to the influence of some kind of culture. The art of the poster, the cinema, the architecture of our streets, broadcast music, are universal and pervasive influences inescapably colouring the mental outlook of every man, and unconsciously establishing his standards of living.

Standards of living are usually calculated in terms of wages, housing, sanitation, calories and vitamins. These are essential, true, for except on that basis no other standards can be conceived or developed. But we cannot speak of a higher standard of living without implying higher standards of social behaviour, of conduct and of thought. Higher standards of conduct depend ultimately upon taste and judgment. And these are faculties directly conditioned by our culture. It is the business of good art to sharpen and articulate taste and judgment: to make us intolerant of the vulgar, the corrupt, the shoddy and the fallacious. Bad art lowers our standards of living, by dulling the sensibility, clouding the judgment, inducing inertia and acquiescence in the shoddier levels of life.

What can we say of our taste and judgment, our standards of conduct as a nation, whether in politics, business or personal relations, from the evidence of recently reported events ? Can we say that in this aspect our standard of living is improving ? And if not, how much of the responsibility lies with the bad art,

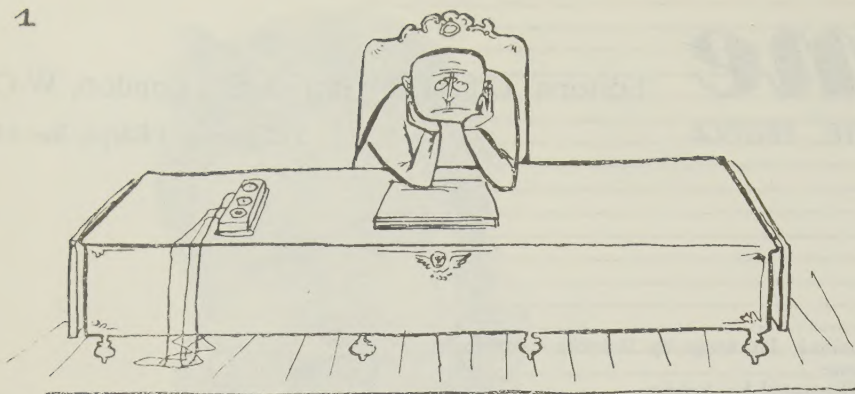
the mass-produced vulgarity which infects our minds like a slow disease ?

This is not a question of priggishness or snobbery. It is simply a question of getting the highest value out of life. The trained man enjoys the game more than the unfit. The man with an alert and sensitive imagination gets more out of life than the doped and dull.

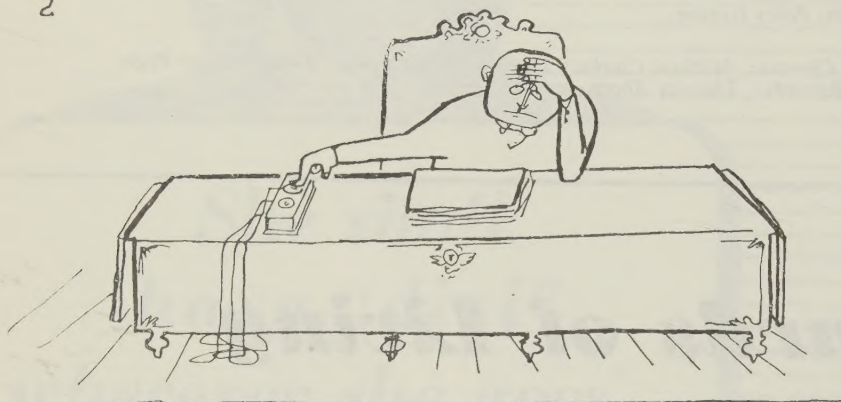
We believe that our national health and vigour depends directly on improving our standards of art everywhere. Not simply the preservation of exclusive, highbrow, experimental art. But all art in its most popular forms and in its widest range, better posters, better domestic architecture, furniture, crockery, clothes—as well as books, films, plays and pictures.

Our appeal, then, as a magazine, is to anybody and everybody who is concerned to improve his or her standards of living. Our potential audience extends over every member of the population who listens to the wireless or goes to the pictures without being irredeemably doped. And we hope to provide them with a continual stimulus to sharpen their judgment and widen their capacities for the enjoyment of life.

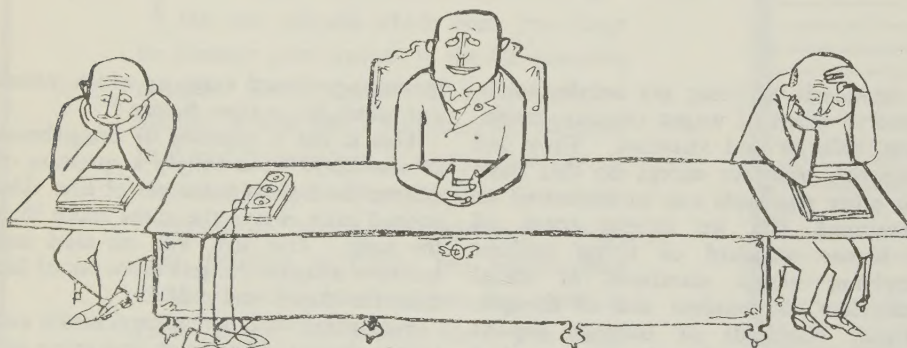
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Money for the Movies

ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE MILLION POUNDS seems a decent annual income for anybody. But it's not enough for the British film industry. That is the sum, roughly, which you put into the till every year. About one third of it goes to His Majesty's Customs and Excise; another third to the exhibitors, leaving a third to be divided unequally between distributor and producer. Actually, the producer, the man responsible for making the film, gets something like one eighth. And that is his chief complaint: there is no other industry, he says, in which the manufac-

turer gets so small a proportion of the takings.

These are the cold economics of the film crisis, which has closed most of the studios in the country and thrown hundreds of film technicians out of work. As with every form of art-product, the original creator is the one who reaps the least reward.

The enormously inflated costs of production, it is agreed, are largely responsible for the film crisis. And this does not mean the salaries drawn by directors, cameramen, script-writers or technicians. They are only the first people to suffer when that ominous word "redundancy" throws its shadow across the studios.

Prestige and Popularity

THERE IS ANOTHER WORD WHICH IS acquiring a sinister sound in relation to the film industry—"Prestige". An outstanding item in the building up of "prestige" in the foreign market appears to be the amount of money which has been lavished upon the production. Producers are giving as an explanation of the crisis the disappointing response to British films abroad. Maybe they have built up the wrong kind of prestige. What will arouse interest in our films abroad is precisely their peculiar national characteristics, just as the difference of atmosphere and handling has caught the interest of British audiences in French and Italian films. The one outstanding contribution which the British have been able to make to the art of film is their documentary authenticity. It is the one characteristic which our films seem to be losing.

They are losing it because of an attitude typified in the present crisis, an attitude which treats film exclusively as an industry, and forgets that it is primarily an art, the most comprehensive medium at present existing for the expression of social consciousness. Markets and not audiences are the terms used by film-makers. The film is becoming increasingly mechanised and dehumanised. And the process will defeat its own ends. Already here and there in this country, cinema audiences have actively asserted their dissatisfaction with the quality of our films. Producers will perhaps learn that they can trade no longer on the habit-forming properties of the cinematic drug.

How it can be done

COMING AT A MOST APPROPRIATE TIME, an example is provided of what can be done by Edward Dmytryk, director of *Cross-fire*, who was arraigned before the Un-American Activities Committee, and is over here making *Obsession* for freelance producer N. A. Bronsten. When completed, *Obsession* will have cost considerably less than the generally estimated minimum for a major feature film. Reason is that it took less than six weeks to shoot, owing to careful and intensive preparation put in by producer, director and staff before going on the floor.

Dmytryk, who was a regular lecturer on motion picture production in Hollywood, was asked by the chairman of the works committee at Pinewood Studios to talk to the technicians about how it was done. "What the British film industry needs is more Dmytryks," said the "floor props" man from *Obsession*.

Ironically, the execution of redundancy notices has postponed this talk.

Mrs. Handley's Boy

YES, YES, YES . . . POOR OLD TOMMY IS dead. Poor old Tommy. . . But not so old, and that's what shocked us all. Everybody who knew him thought an awful lot of him. In and out and round about Broadcasting House you find all sorts: some of them little people with very big ideas about themselves. But this little man Handley who really was a *big* radio figure—very big—was a most humble man. It wasn't an act. He just did not know how big he was—or, perhaps he didn't want to know.

Why was he such a successful radio comic? Why was Itma so popular for so long? Why did the programme have to die, also, when "that man" died? Perhaps all we can do is to put down some factors and see what they add up to. Let's start from the qualities of Tommy the comic. He had a good breezy voice: a voice that made you visualise a jolly, perky, lovable character—which he was. And, unlike some radio-comic types we could mention, it was the kind of voice that is readily acceptable to all sections of the vast radio audience, from the Cockney coster to the Lancashire weaver—to the Royal Family with whom he was a favourite. Next, he had *pace*—with him there were no deathly seconds of unused time between cues, even missed cues. There was no flagging. Then, there was the content of his lines—the *kind of*

humour in which he excelled, which was natural to him.

To understand this we shall have to digress a little: firstly, to remember what has actually happened to us all in these last 20 years, when practically every family in the country have got themselves a radio set and through this medium have to some extent been drawn together into one great community. We must recognise that about radio—it is significant.

Of all the "importances" of radio, perhaps the most outstanding is its power as an instrument for the expression and creation of communal aims, communal ideas. That at one and the same time it is in the home—snug and intimate—and is shared by everybody else and thus is a new form of communal participation. It is in this fact, in my opinion, that one finds the clue to why Itma emerged and rose to prominence precisely when it did; that is, at the beginning of a great war when the people were drawn together in a new way, sharing common emotions and objectives, clearly seen by all. The very name of the programme tells the story.

Everything hateful, detestable and fearful was embodied in the menacing figure of "that man" Hitler. The very name almost scalded the tongue; everybody felt that. Everybody was slightly got down by him—with his blitzkrieg and his Panzers and his Storm Troops jackbooting across Europe.

Then there came a lovable little chap who somehow made everybody fling off their inferior feelings; who embodied in himself quite the opposite qualities to the universal menace, and had the cheek to call himself *Itma*. It wasn't a pun or even a wisecrack, and it didn't really make sense, but it did somehow take some of the fearfulness out of that nasty character howling and raving his threats, full of his deadly-serious Teutonic pomposity and grimness. It cocked a snoot at him and said Yah! Because it did that the British people, who loathed Hitler, loved Itma. The show did what *they* wanted, even *needed*, to do. The humour of Itma was evolved out of that necessity of the British people in those times.

It was the simple brand of humour. Not smart-allick stuff; not vicious or vindictive or malicious; not "smutty" or sadistic; not epigrammatic wit—but jolly,

friendly, kind-hearted, good-natured, saucy, leaving no bad taste or hurt feelings. And the method was the time-honoured one: take a "character" and give him or her a catch-phrase. There it is in a nutshell; and there you have the elements of the basic humour of the people anywhere at any time. (You'll find, for example, that such humour flourished in the old City of London when it was a rich, rollicking mass of people packed in a small area and bound together by all manner of common ties.)

Take a "character" such as everyone knows: a brash charwoman or a high-powered idealist; a bloke with a comical impediment in his speech or a horse-faced, middle-aged, strait-laced o'd maid hiding the romantic heart of a schoolgirl; a professional sozzler, full of booze and that wondrous grave saloon-bar dignity that we're all guilty of on occasions, or a lugubrious, melancholy female flapping through life; take any one of these and give them dialogue suited to their character, have it spoken *in character*, and give them a catch-phrase that sums them up. I don't have to repeat them here—you know them all.

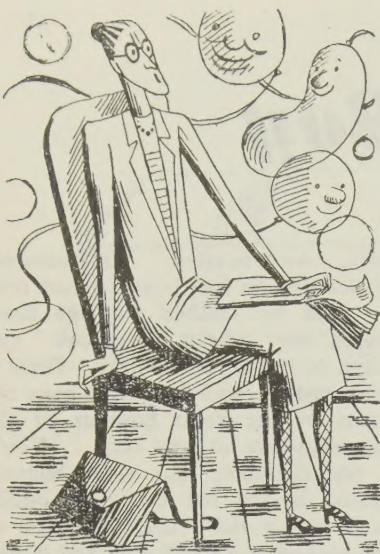
Now, the force of such humour is more in *how it is said* than what is said. It's the humour of the "character" in the workshop, the office, the local, or "down our street" whose side-splitting



I brought this for you, Sir.



I'm all right now . . .



Mister HANDLEAH . . .

remarks (often unconscious) cannot really be conveyed because "it's the way he says them that's so darned funny—if only you could hear him!" What Itma did for us was to lift those characters out of the people and broadcast them for everyone to hear and enjoy. Whenever radio does that it *must* be brilliantly successful and its appeal *must* be universal.

It's as simple as that—and as difficult. It is doing in sound what the clowns have been doing in mime, gesture and acrobatics in the circus since time immemorial. And, Itma also had that quality that all great clowns must have, if they will fully satisfy the people—topicality.

But a radio half hour, because it cannot be seen, needs above all to be



I don't mind if I do, Sir.

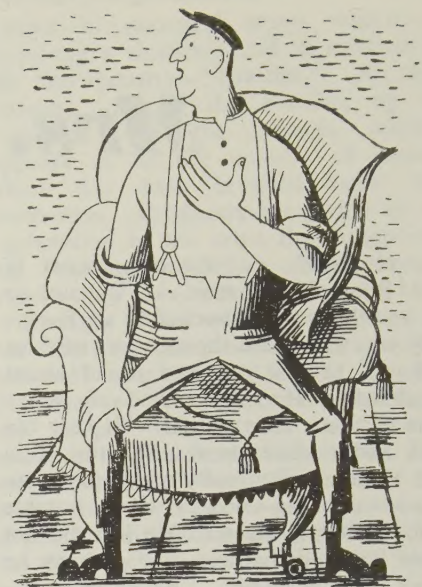
integrated—just a collection of odd "characters" will not work. They have to be presented, set off, by a very special character—a supreme "straight", so "straight" that he's wildly funny. The great virtue of this one must, obviously, be tolerance. Other useful qualities he should have, would be humility, cocksureness, unshakeable optimism, gaiety, a bubbling ready ability to retort, the love of a good laugh and a childlike willingness to enter into any game that's going. Such a character is clearly not easy to find, but when he does appear he usually makes a Charlie Chaplin or—a Tommy Handley.

The brilliant Ted Kavanagh made Tommy the integrating element in the constant stream of characters he scripted for Itma. The ingenious radio-producer Francis Worsley marshalled actors and music and sounds and got everything superbly timed, shaped and listenable—but only Tommy gave it that final verve, that enormous zest, the ingredient that made the programme what it was. The thing which lifted the words of the script off the paper and made them living things; that made the breezes of mirth become gusts of laughter, and made chesty chuckles become great belly bellows.

The pace which might have been swift and smooth he made to be tear-away, leaping, cavorting. Yes, the programme was the creation of the trio—Kavanagh, Worsley, Handley—but I think it must be said that the one really irreplaceable member of the trio was Tommy. Without him—no Itma. So, when death took him the programme had to die, too. And we mourn both.

In the death of Tommy the people have lost a supreme artist. They found him in his full powers ready to serve them when they most needed more of life to offset the death that was everywhere. At the same time they were taking a greater interest in classical music, drama, literature, painting and the other arts. In that sense Itma was part of the general cultural growth which emerged from the British people during the war. A time when one-ness of purpose gripped them and the individual laboured and fought for the community rather than against the community for himself. Tommy Handley and Itma was, therefore, thrown up to serve the people in the same way as is a political or military leader.

What a joy it was to go to Tomtopia! (How significant was the selection of that name!) "To the devil with everything—this is the life for us," we said, "Tommy



Wot ME? In my state of health?

knows what we want."

With all its craziness, was not Tomtopia really a haven of sanity when compared with our so-called real world? And was not this little man Handley symbolic of all of us, in that he was, as Sir William Haley so aptly put it, "the man to whom everything happened"?

He served us well! That is why so many thousands turned out to his funeral. And that is why so many millions caught back a tear when, at the end of the broadcast on the evening of his funeral, the music once more struck up the signature tune from which so often had emerged: "Hello, folks!" But the lad from Liverpool will not greet us again. Mrs. Handley's boy is gone and we are the losers.



It's bein' so cheerful . . .

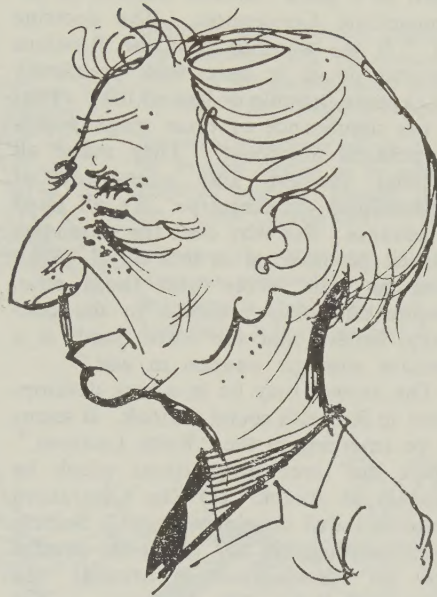
Drawings by
Dorothy Chapman.

The Decline of a Rationalist

PHILOSOPHERS HAVE OFTEN TAKEN PART in political affairs, and most of the great ones have had their effect on the course of history. Sometimes their intervention was direct—as with John Locke, who took sides in the 1688 revolution. Others, like the Encyclopedistes in 18th century France, were responsible for much of the intellectual ferment which went into the French Revolution. There have been the philosophers who stood for established authority. Hegel, who loved the Prussian State, intended to do that.

It is never wasted time to enquire what philosophers are preaching in the world of politics. And I think a short examination of the politics of Bertrand Russell will be mildly rewarding. He is one of the foremost intellectuals of our time. He is a "thinker" in the older sense of the word—a man who considers all human knowledge and is not just a specialist in one branch. He is a mathematician, a logician, a philosopher and an educationalist. Yet, despite his great intellect, he has usually been on the side of the common man in his thinking. He has always thought it more important to keep contact between science, logic and ordinary thought, than to pursue philosophical speculations into realms where the ordinary man cannot follow. This characteristic has often landed him in controversies with his more academic colleagues. They have never seen, as he has, that the demands of common-sense came before those of systematic consistency. What I think can rightly be called his discoveries in the field of logic gave rise to a whole new school of Philosophy: the Logical Positivists, who have become fashionable and influential in the last twenty years or so. But Russell's refusal to pursue conclusions with ruthless disregard for the demands of common-sense brought him into conflict with his disciples. He works in the best traditions of English philosophy—he is an empiricist. He is trying to find out what it is legitimate for the human mind to consider, to prevent science dashing off into speculations which mean nothing, and to keep philosophy tied to the problem of human knowledge rather than allowing it to become a fantasy of metaphysical constructions.

In that sense Russell is a progressive: his approach to philosophy is democratic.



But his empiricism is nothing new. One of the greatest exponents of empiricism was John Stuart Mill, the leading British philosopher 100 years ago. Mill was a radical, and Russell is a radical as well, both by inclination and upbringing. But radicalism—left-wing liberalism, if you like—was in an ascending phase when Mill wrote. His moral doctrine was known as Utilitarianism—the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It formed the moral justification of laissez-fair capitalism, which was also in its ascending phase 100 years ago. Neither laissez-faire capitalism nor its official moral code have survived. The main working-class Radical tradition has been taken over by the Labour Party—and this is the basic reason for Liberalism's decay. And intellectual radicals found it increasingly difficult to enter into politics as the traditional vehicle of their efforts, the Liberal Party, gradually fell into impotence.

The Russell family—Whig and later Liberal—was caught up in this process. Bertrand Russell, the present Earl, projected his Liberal-radicalism into education for a time. And in the late 1930's he became a passionate supporter of the Pacifist cause.

Here is the contradiction in his political career—a contradiction which emerges in various ways among the displaced persons of Liberalism. In the 30's Russell was a pacifist. Now he takes his stand among the angry old men who want war with Russia.

It seems to me that an empiricist and a liberal can, quite logically, adopt the pacifist cause. An empiricist must take the view that nothing is *certain*. Outside logic and mathematics there is no certainty. It is reasonable to oppose war on the grounds that, even given victory, it is not certain that what you fought for can survive fighting. The Russell line was not the religious one. It was purely rational. He said, in effect: "Let us take the chance that Hitler will rule us, because in fighting we may well lose more than we should by submitting or by using non-violent techniques of resistance. That was in the days when we knew about Dachau, but not about Beisen and Ausschwitz. Russell knew too that his pacifist opposite number in Germany, Ossietzky, had been slowly murdered in a concentration camp. In other words his views may have been wrong, but they were logically defensible, and implied some personal courage as well.

Now Russell assumes that the next war is to be with Stalin. But he no longer takes the view that he took when it was to be with Hitler. Now he suggests the complete subordination of Britain to America, so that the U.S.A. can wage a swift and decisive atomic war against the Russians.

Why the change? It must mean that Russell hates Russians or Communists much more than he ever hated Germans or Nazis. Nor do I think that even if he had been told that we had the atomic bomb in 1938, he would then have urged the use of it against Germany. His principles would not have been affected by the knowledge that Britain had a special war-like advantage. He was not in 1938 prepared to kill a single German in order to displace Hitler. Now he contemplates with equanimity wholesale slaughter of Russians in order to get rid of Stalin.

His reasoning, in the present circumstances, is something like this. Starting from the liberal-empiricist axiom that all views must be tolerated, he reasons:

"The Communists will not tolerate my views, but I mean to express by views, therefore I will blot out the Communists before they get at me." His reasoning may be different in some details, but in essence it must be that. It is the oldest fallacy in the world: you enforce tolerance by intolerance. Or in this case it is worse: you will cause millions to die—so that they are beyond the reach of tolerance or its absence—in order that the intolerant may no longer be tolerated. Moreover the man with the atom bomb has, it appears, some clear right to say who is and who is not tolerant. The possession of great power confers the right to decide which men may survive. Russell has yet to give us any major work on his views on Morals and Ethics. But if he does, and he starts out from premises like that, he should succeed in making Machiavelli look like an inhibited Sunday-school teacher.

The question one asks oneself is: "Can it really be meant seriously? Is a logician of Russell's standing capable of thinking like that?" I think he does. And the reason is that logic comes off a poor second when we are dealing with superstition. For what has happened is that Russell has fallen for a very old belief—it is fundamental in primitive society—that if you know the real name of a thing or a person, you have power over it. Another way of looking at it is: certain words do not correspond to facts but are merely an expression of pleasure or disgust on the part of the speaker. Russell, in common with the other angry old men, has two words of this type in his political vocabulary: Totalitarianism and Atomic Bomb. Totalitarianism is a disgust word; Atom bomb is a delight-word. You have probably met the sentiment—"There's no difference between Fascism and Communism, they're both totalitarian." It's usually uttered nowadays by people who were active appeasers in 1938, when they infinitely preferred Fascism to Communism. And they still do, because the people who hold that view will, if you can't stop them, tell you their plan to run Russia out of United Nations and get Spain in. Their impartiality in face of totalitarianism is undimmed by the passage of time.

In the new mythology, if you can attach the word "totalitarian" to any state or government, that gives you the power to decree punishment. You have the right—but you are allowed to select your victims. You can construct a category called "relatively harmless totalitarians." You must use the word "relatively", otherwise the charm is spoiled. The "relatively harmless" ones are those you don't intend to jail or

throw atom bombs at—they are Franco and Mosley. But for the others, Stalin and Pollitt, the full measure of your righteous wrath is reserved. Looked at soberly the prospect of war with Russia is dangerous, and the chances of victory for Britain are, to put it mildly, debatable. That's where the delight-word Atom Bomb comes in. For the angry old men the bomb has nothing to do with nuclear fission. It is a doctrine believed in by them as a good Catholic believes in the Immaculate Conception. The doctrine is: "If we want to beat the Russians we can do it at once with practically no expense, trouble or loss of life." That is the significance of these magic words in political argument. They make all rational thought and assessment of probabilities unnecessary. It's all fixed in advance. But why does the rationalist Russell get infected in this way? Why does he join forces with those who, despite enormous evidence to the contrary, believe that the atom bomb is a decisive strategic weapon in war?

The answer may lie in a new development in Russell's social outlook. It seems to be emerging in the "Reith Lectures". There are three propositions which he appears to accept. (1) The Centralised State is a bad development. (2) Society is proceeding too far along its present line of development — towards the Paternalist State. (3) Adventure is disappearing from life, which is, therefore, losing its savour.

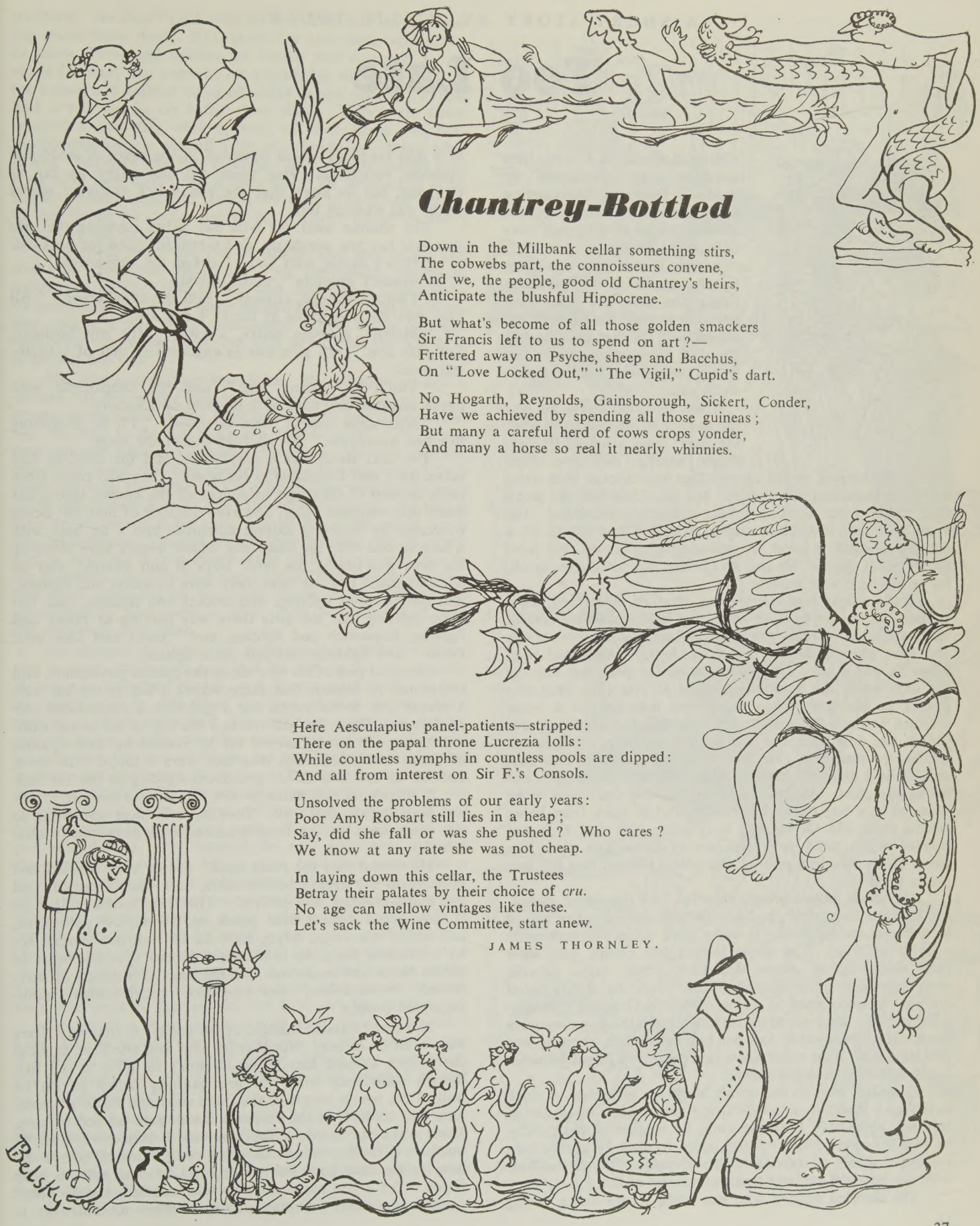
These are certainly not propositions one would expect to find in the political philosophy of a liberal empiricist. They smack of the historical pseudo-philosophies of Arnold Toynbee and his less respectable predecessor, Oswald Spengler. Spengler was a woolly-minded Hegelian, who distorted history in order to fit it into his categories and theories. Toynbee, on the other hand, is a scholar, not a crank. He has combined the results of enormous research in an effort to find a rhythm or pattern in history. But his conclusion is basically the same as Spengler's: that history is a series of cultures which are born, grow up, decay and die. Toynbee, like Spengler, believes we are on a downward run—we are in a decaying phase. But Toynbee says that there is still time to save ourselves. We can do it by back-peddalling. Christianity is what we want—not Communism. Spengler finished his work in 1919 and he had not tried to fit Communism (or Russia for that matter) into his madman's jig-saw puzzle. Nevertheless he would have agreed with Toynbee that what we needed was to go backwards. But being a good Hegelian, he couldn't have believed it was possible.

Russell, I suspect, has caught the

Spengler virus via Toynbee. That would explain the difference in degree between his dislike of Communists and Nazis. Let's take those three propositions again. The disgust-words — the Centralised State and Going in the Wrong Direction, the delight-word—Adventure (but it's disappearing). Well, both the Nazis and Communists—on Russell's axioms—are for the Central State. Therefore both are to be disliked on that ground. But on the other two, the Nazis get much better marks. If ever a state back-pedalled it was the Third Reich. It destroyed all the carefully built-up social morality of 2,000 years. In its collapse it completely wrecked the machine of Government. The only right recognised was that of power. All progress towards social or racial equality was annihilated. To achieve these ends it released instincts long since suppressed in human beings. Adventure was permanently ensured by endless wars and the loot that went with them. And, the whole thing having failed, the last scene, in Berlin, was truly Heroic. There was a marriage, a suicide pact and a funeral pyre amid bursting shells. The whole thing was filled with Adventure.

The Soviet State, however, merely threatens to carry on the line of development towards the logical end of the Social State. That, according to your taste, is either the ant-heap or a class state ruled by a Bureaucracy. Whatever he thinks it will become, Russell would not like it. And as for Adventure. Where's the excitement in a Five-Year Plan? And how dull to till a collective farm compared with the adventure of looting it and burning it to the ground! For us in the West there's always the adventure of the Atom Bomb, too—which, if Russell were right—would be the same sort of adventure as shooting a rabbit with a shot-gun.

How does he, with his respectable past and lineage, come to be mixed up with such questionable ideas and people? It may come down to the fact that all the goals of radicalism have now been achieved. What should have been a Utopian millenium was merely a stage in our past history with nothing particularly Utopian about it. Yet it had for the liberals a certain intellectual congruence—a logical beauty—which they miss in modern developments. If they try to translate that feeling of loss into political terms it comes out as a longing to stop or put the clock back. But as no liberal could ever confess to such sentiments, they cover them up—they repress them. They emerge eventually as malignant insects from under a stone. The combination of fear and frustration is a dangerous one—it threatens the very structure of reason.



Chantrey-Bottled

Down in the Millbank cellar something stirs,
The cobwebs part, the connoisseurs convene,
And we, the people, good old Chantrey's heirs,
Anticipate the blushful Hippocrene.

But what's become of all those golden smackers
Sir Francis left to us to spend on art?—
Frittered away on Psyche, sheep and Bacchus,
On "Love Locked Out," "The Vigil," Cupid's dart.

No Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Sickert, Conder,
Have we achieved by spending all those guineas;
But many a careful herd of cows crops yonder,
And many a horse so real it nearly whinnies.

Here Aesculapius' panel-patients—stripped:
There on the papal throne Lucrezia lolls:
While countless nymphs in countless pools are dipped:
And all from interest on Sir F.'s Consols.

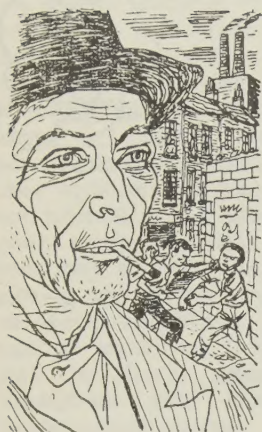
Unsolved the problems of our early years:
Poor Amy Robsart still lies in a heap;
Say, did she fall or was she pushed? Who cares?
We know at any rate she was not cheap.

In laying down this cellar, the Trustees
Betray their palates by their choice of *cru*.
No age can mellow vintages like these.
Let's sack the Wine Committee, start anew.

JAMES THORNLEY.

Belsky

Too Late



GRANDAD GREW IN A CITY. HIS sunshine was intersected by shadows from the overhanging roofs of industrial buildings that elbowed for room with long rows of huddled houses.

But the loss of light was offset by the fact that the buildings broke the whip of the wind before it reached the basin of the streets, and the fact that the full force of the rain was never felt by the people who lived in Grandad's city.

It was Grandad's city. He was the essence of its industrial soul. He had been stunted by too much smoke and too little

light. He carried in his rickety legs the disease that dates from the Industrial Revolution. His shoulders had the stoop that comes from bending to an unbending machine. His voice had that distinctive rasping whisper that speaks of a dampness which is good for manufacturing cotton, but hard on the vocal chords. He had an eye that did not dislike muck, for with muck went money.

Trade was to him a capricious creature, something like a woman, to be won by hard work, and held against all comers from all lands. Trade was good or bad, but she was trade, and even when trade was bad it was better than it had been when he was a lad. There was always the dole, not like the old days when the workhouse leered at you each time you passed it; the days when there was nothing but a wage between you and the workhouse. Not that Grandad had ever drawn the dole, and not that he'd have been much worse off had he drawn it. He was sixty-five years old this day, and all he'd done in sixty-five years was to keep himself and his family alive. All he'd done in sixty-five years was to be born, to be a boy till he was twelve, and to work from being twelve years old till he was sixty-five. Not that Grandad minded work, mind you. In fact as he walked along the street to his favourite pub he was telling himself that life was pretty good.

The street looked proper cheerful. All the doors, including his own front door, had just been done mahogany colour by order of the landlord. It was a good wood was mahogany—a bit of class. The doors looked like coffins with their rich colour, their brass knockers, their high varnish, and their narrowing fanlights. But then he didn't mind coffins. You got used to seeing coffins in Grandad's street—good coffins. They saved up for them from the day they were born. His own mother had put him in for one when he was two days old. You never knew how soon you might be needing a coffin in Grandad's street.

Grandad went to the corner shop for an ounce of thick twist, and stood in a small space surrounded by cards of buttons, by tins of boot blacking, by wedges of thick cake, by bundles of candles, by cough cures, by lard, by patent corn removers, afraid of moving lest a movement littered the floor with the hundred and one small necessities of life.

The shawled woman who was being served was speaking

in a sign language which consisted in the main of nods and eyebrow twitchings. Her voice did not carry as far as Grandad, but he knew that she was a tick customer whose credit was wearing thin.

The woman went out with her shawl covering the arm that held her few purchases, and Grandad asked for his twist.

"How's things with you?" asked the shopkeeper.

"Mustn't grumble", said Grandad.

"That's a change, anyway", said the shopkeeper. "All they ever do is grumble as far as I can see."

"Mustn't grumble today, anyway. It's my birthday. I'm sixty-five." His grin was as engaging as that of a toothless child.

"You'll be retiring next", said the shopkeeper with heavy sarcasm, and they both laughed sardonically.

"Aye, some hopes!" said Grandad. "I'll be grumbling like hell tomorrow." He shuffled out of the shop.

The next street was a play street, and the children had taken the Chief Constable at his word. They had come from miles around to take part in almost all the known sports bar those that required water, and even the lack of that was being overcome by directing natural amenities into a tin bath with a hole in one end; the small boy whose fingers were stopping the hole was urging the other boys to aim straight, and no overshooting. For the boys there were rounders and fighting, and rally-ho and fighting, and cricket and fighting, and just plain fighting; for the girls there was playing at house and fighting, hopscotch and fighting, and "Stand and face your Lover" and fighting, and just plain fighting.

Grandad picked his way along the packed pavements, and murmured to himself that there wasn't a lad in the lot with a proper seat to his pants, nor a girl with a respectable pair of drawers. When he had reached the top of the street without having his head knocked off he revised his first opinion of them, which had been that they were a lot of little b—s, because he saw two of his grandsons fighting at the far end.

"There's no real harm in 'em," he said to himself. "It's just high spirits—that's all. They have to have something to do. They keep 'em too long at school these days—that's what it is."

He turned into the main road. Motor vans spurted and snorted on the greasy cobblestones, cart wheels rattled, and the trams clanked and swayed. The shop fronts bulged as if they would deposit their goods on the narrow pavements, and above the shops, filling each bit of wall not spoken for by a window, hung the brilliantly coloured advertisements of patent foods and medicines, like the flags of a nation of sore-footed, stomach-less, heavy-headed, cough-ridden, semi-paralysed people.

Not that Grandad thought of the posters in that way. They were a bit of colour. Not that he paid any attention to what the posters advised him to do in order to enjoy a full life, though sometimes when he had nothing better to do he walked the whole length of the main road and made a mental note that he had all the ailments the posters offered to cure. There were one or two exceptions—for instance, what did he want, at sixty-five, with a schoolgirl complexion all over? So long as his skin kept knitted up, and he was able to keep inside it for a few more years he was satisfied, and he didn't propose to start worrying about whether it came up to

standard. He didn't hold with all this B.O. stuff he was seeing about these days. B.O. stood for something else where he came from, and besides his family had managed to get along for sixty-five years to his knowledge without a bath in the house, and without being offensive to one another. People had a fair mania on baths these days. They were never satisfied unless they were opening all their pores and risking pneumonia. It was all a lot of propaganda—that's what it was. But they sold him nothing. If it was his money they were after they were wasting their time. He believed in keeping his bowels open, and putting his trust in God and nature. If that failed he could always get a bottle made up for a tanner by the herbalist.

The main street was full of smells; dust and damp, and over-ripe fruit, and meat; soon all the smells would be submerged by the smell of fish and chip frying. He'd have six penn'orth on his way home tonight because it was his birthday, and he'd take Alice some home. She'd be up all night with wind round the heart, but he'd never hear the last of it if he left her out.

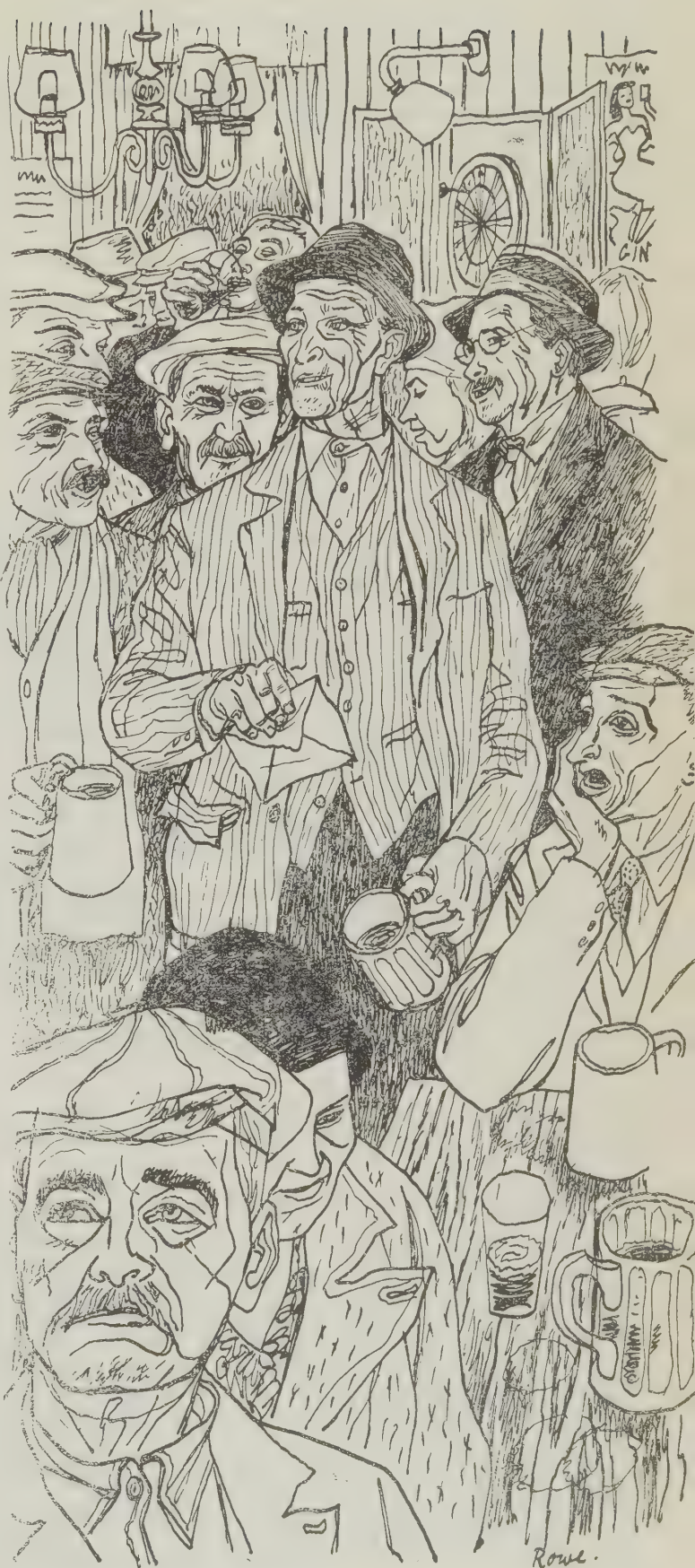
She was a meitherer was Alice. She couldn't sit still a minute. If she wasn't knitting she was nattering, and if she wasn't doing either it was only because she was asleep. The less she had to do the more she found to do. There was only him and Alice at home now that all the kids were married, but Alice could still find enough to do to keep herself at it from morning till night. They'd both been looking forward to the time when the kids would be off their hands, and they'd be able to take it a bit easy; but as far as he could see it was no different. None of his children lived far enough away, and if anything it was worse what with having to listen to his daughters on their husbands, and his sons on their wives, and what with having the place cluttered up with all his grandchildren who were a damn sight worse-behaved than his own had ever been.

He stopped in front of a pawnbroker's window. There was a watch there that he'd had his eye on for six months. It was an unclaimed pledge, and it was solid gold. It had an albert with it. He liked the look of that watch. He'd wanted a watch since he'd been eighteen years old; but he was no nearer getting one than he had been then. The only trouble with the sort of life he led was that you didn't seem to make any headway. He surveyed the stock in the window, and was struck by the amount of wealth there was in the neighbourhood when it was sold in bits and pieces, and brought together under one roof. Everything of value was put behind bars. He touched the iron grille that guarded the window. Even the bit of open land that passed for a park was railed off and only opened at certain times. The only time he'd ever got near something really good, something that seemed as if it might belong to him as much as anyone else, was when he spent a week-end in Wales. But that was forty-five years ago. He'd imagined then that he'd be able to go there at least once a year. But he was young then, and he hadn't reckoned on a child every twelve months. He'd had days at the seaside, but it wasn't the same thing.

He wasn't a man who hankered after things he couldn't have, and he wouldn't be thinking like he was thinking now if it hadn't been his birthday today. When you were sixty-five you knew that you hadn't much to look forward to, and so you started looking back.

What the hell would he do with a gold watch, anyway? He hadn't the right suit to set it off, and there was that many clocks where he worked that it would have been a waste of time having a watch. A waste of time—he laughed and broke his daydream.

He moved away from the window. He was becoming



a beggar for day-dreaming. That's what came of getting old. He'd nearly forgotten that he'd arranged to meet some of his workmates at the "Lion and Unicorn".

He stepped out smartly, ignoring the shops between the pawnbroker and the pub. He went into the vault, and there were three of them there, ahead of him.

There was Sep, and Albert and Luke. They all worked alongside him, but he'd been on the job before the three of 'em had been born. They weren't special friends of his because he hadn't any special friends, and he'd been a bit surprised when they suggested meeting him tonight. He had a ten-bob note in his pocket, and he bought them each a gill before he found himself a seat.

"Well, Grandad," said Jack, who was a lad of about thirty. "We've come here—"

"Let me tell him," said Sep, who was just turned fifty.

"Nay," said Luke. "It was Albert here as did the collecting, so by rights he ought to speak."

"I don't hold with it really," said Albert. "Even though I've done the collecting. It's something that should be provided by the State."

"What is it?" asked Grandad. "Speak up instead of going round in circles."

"Well," said Sep, and in letting out his breath on the word he almost uptipped the table. "We got to talking about you and your great age, Grandad."

"Here! Not so much of this great age touch," said Grandad. "I'm nobbut a lad at sixty-five."

"But it is a great age," said Albert. "Considering the conditions of the working class it's a miracle that a man ever reaches sixty-five."

"Hold hard," said Grandad. "You'll have me dead and buried before I've properly had me birthday."

"And hold hard with all that Red talk of yours, Albert, or you'll be getting the sack. It's not a bed of roses for any of us, but the Lord looks after his own."

"Oh, don't let's start on the Lord," said Jack. "We'll be here all night."

"Well," said Sep, "since you all seem to have come here to air your views we'd best have a chairman, and since I'm the oldest, bar Grandad, who's illegible in any case, I'll get on with it." He fished in his breast-pocket and brought out an envelope which he placed on the table. "This is it," he said, and he looked at the envelope as he spoke. "We got to talking about you last week, Grandad, and we saw how it had been for you. Nowt but hard work all your life. It's been the same way for us, for all of us if it comes to that, but we're younger. If you remember you were talking about not having had a real holiday in forty-five year. Well, we decided to have a collection—a bob a nob right round the works."

He looked up and Grandad said: "Here, now—." But Sep continued.

"You don't have to feel that way about it," he said. "We wanted to give you a bit of a birthday present, you being the oldest man in the shop, and we thought there was no sense in buying you a clock, or something damn silly like that because you don't need no reminder of the passing of time. So we decided to ask you to take a week's holiday when the works closes down for the wakes next week."

He picked up the envelope and held it out to Grandad. "We hope you enjoy yourself."

Grandad took the envelope, and as he stared down at it his face went pale.

"You shouldn't have done it," he said, and his voice shook. "But thanks, all the same."

They all coughed self-consciously, and Grandad's colour returned.

He got up and brought five gills to the table. The movement did him good.

"Will you go to Wales?" asked Jack.

"Aye," said Grandad. "That's it. I'll go to Wales."

"With your old woman?" asked Albert.

"Aye," said Grandad. "With the old woman. She'd watch me going without her." He had his beer halfway to his mouth when he thought of something. "I'd better go home and tell the Missus. She'll carry on something shocking about this. She'll say I've sprung it on her at the last minute."

He shook hands with them all, and went out looking like a man who is not sure whether he has won the Irish Sweep.

"We shouldn't have done it," said Albert when Grandad had gone. "I told you we shouldn't have done it. It's half a loaf—that's what it is. You can't alter a system by giving a man a week's holiday. It's the system that's wrong."

"It's you that's wrong," said Sep. "You've got to work to live. We get a bit of beer and a bit of baccy. What more do you expect?"

Grandad was enjoying his walk to his home. It was dusk. Broad shafts of light silhouetted capped loungers at the street corners. The children were grouped outside the swing doors of the public-houses, waiting for father. The evening conversations had begun from house to house as wives sat on doorsteps and discussed birth and death, and their husbands. The lovers whispered in the back entries. The cats were creeping out in readiness for the moment when they made the night their own. A woman was brawling with her husband who was refusing to stand for any more old buck. A child sat on the edge of the pavement trying to pull up the road grid as it ate a jam butty. The aspidistras gleamed behind the glass of every parlour window. The smell of frying had swallowed all other smells.

Grandad drew a deep breath. He belonged to it, and because he now had a chance of getting away from it, he knew that he loved it.

Wales hadn't altered much, so perhaps it was Grandad who had altered. The scenery was there, but there was too much of it. A lot of space can be a bleak thing when you come across it late in life. He was stirred, but it was like being stirred by a strong dose of salts. When he sat still the scenery got at him, and he was fighting all the time to stop the emptiness entering his heart.

He didn't like to say anything to Alice. She hadn't been keen on coming in the first place, but now she was there she seemed to like it well enough. She'd knitted up eight ounces of wool in two days. But all he could do was to try to sit still and watch the sea in front of him, and the mountains on either side. He felt like a fly without wings set down in the centre of an immense, slippery basin.

When he was in bed on the third night of their stay he was seized by an unbearable longing to be back at home. All the legions of the dead were crowding in on him, reaching out to him now that he no longer sheltered behind the brick walls of his city. He had to say something.

"Alice," he said. "Alice," and he sat himself up in bed. "I don't like it. What's the matter with it? It's all different from the last time we was here."

She snorted and rolled over on her side. "Of course it's different, you fool," she said. "You were twenty then, and on your honeymoon."

He waited for a moment, and then said on a sigh: "So that's what it is!"

She was fast asleep, snoring, when he said to himself, like a child that has chosen the wrong hand: "It's come too late. It would have been better to have had the watch."

LOUIS GOLDING

Ruins and Visions

PICTURES OF OLD AND NEW POLAND



Drawings by Ronald Searle and Paul Hogarth

The eye of the artist and the novelist sees below the fallacious surface of mere factual comment. These drawings were made while the two artists were in Poland last summer. And we requested Louis Golding, who was an outstanding figure at the Wroclaw Congress of Intellectuals, to write for us his latest impressions of the Warsaw he has loved and described so unforgettably in his novels.

TO SEE POLAND IN THESE TIMES IS LIKE witnessing a drama played against a grim background of desolation, or, by some miraculous acceleration of the processes of nature, like watching the germination, the budding and the flowering of a tenacious plant on a rubble heap.

The impact of the experience is bewildering and the mind copes with a flood of contrasting impressions that require the settled tranquillity of time and leisure before they can be assimilated. We are still, as it were, digesting the experience of war: in Poland we can watch the act of digestion taking place.

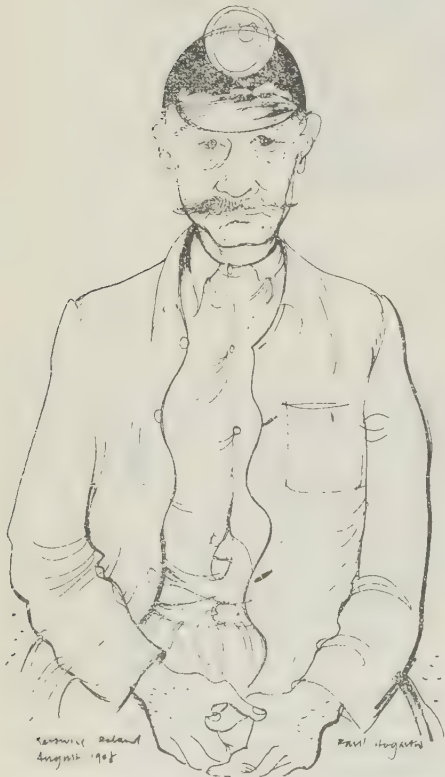
One can see the new architecture of

the future being grafted on the mutilated past all over the country, but it is in Warsaw that it finds its most dramatic expression. This is the city which Hitler vowed to destroy so completely that not one stone should be left standing on another. The gay intention was very nearly fulfilled. None the less, Hitler failed. You cannot destroy a city without destroying the spirit and the civilisation that inform it. Less than three years after the end of the war Warsaw, the phoenix, rises from its ashes, and it is under the broken rubble of his own Chancellery that the Nazi leader lies incinerated.



Wierzchowice Pit, Janow, Silesia.

Ronald Searle



Silesian Miner.

Paul Hogarth

The Poles, with fantastic spirit, are rebuilding their capital literally with bare fingers, in the absence of sufficient bulldozers and other large-scale mechanical equipment. They are doing it with a respect for tradition and a sense of beauty that is particularly admirable in the circumstances. Warsaw is not becoming a sort of mining shack town in a gold-rush. The gracious old city is being rebuilt along its 17th and 18th century lines, yet in accordance with the soundest town-planning principles yet evolved. It may be partly due to the actual nature of the classical architecture of Warsaw, both in style and material, that rebuilding can be carried out in such a way as to recreate the grace and harmony of the older city. Whatever the reason, it does emphasise in an enduring way the spirit of the people and their culture. Everyone devotes his seventh day to the work. Not the city dwellers alone, but also peasants who travel in gaily-decorated carts from the furthest parts of Poland

and soldiers on leave from their barracks.

One comes away from the country with a sense of the extraordinary diffusion of good taste both among the people of its cities and its peasantry. There is a constant effort on their part to preserve something of the ritual and beauty of living. I remember attending a Mass some forty miles from Warsaw in which peasants, male and female, wore costumes more beautiful than any I have seen on the ballet stage of Covent Garden.

Up among the Tatra Mountains I found unsophisticated people, and children as young as ten or twelve years, making sacred and animal images which would establish the reputation of any Montparnasse artist. It is only one of the examples of folk art that flourishes in many parts of Poland.

I visited Chopin's house, together with various members of the Cultural Congress for Peace, to hear some famous Chopinists perform there. Preserved as a national shrine, the house is not merely



The Apprentice Welder. Paul Hogarth

Peasant Woman, Zakopane. Ronald Searle



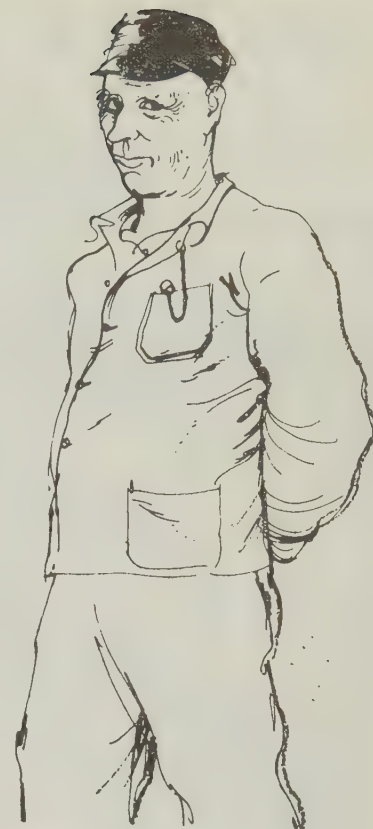
a museum; it is fresh and lived in and has not been emptied of the melodious spirit of the great composer. So actual is the illusion of his presence that I felt as though we were his guests and the house a neutral place, timeless in the empire of time. The experience was curiously moving and tranquillising.

The house had white walls and unconcealed ceiling beams, blue painted and sprayed with fragrant flowers. A girl with red hair played Nocturnes, the summer wind lightly stirring the frilled white curtains behind her. Through the window came the smell of mignonette and iris and below us was the river, flowing placidly under the trailing curtains of willow.

Then Raoul de Koczalski, the leading exponent of the old school of Chopin players, took his place at the piano. He was a phantom old man, a figure which seemed wraith-like and on the point of vanishing into the summer air. Yet, perhaps because he was half a ghost himself, perhaps by the magic of his playing, as the solar and lunar harmonies of the music filled the afternoon, he seemed to conjure up the physical presence of the great composer so that one could almost imagine him standing in the shadows and listening gravely.

One felt in the old pianist a sense of apostolic succession. He was a disciple of Karl Micali, himself a disciple of Chopin. Through men like this the tradition was diffused and the rich culture and tradition of Poland was carried forward into the teeming future. It had survived the war and had overcome the war: it was a testament of the toughness of the spirit.

Listening to the Valse in B Major and the Ballade in C Minor, I thought of the day I had stood among the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto. No region of any other city had been so dreadfully pulverised. It was a desert, featureless and mournful, and one could scarcely imagine it as having been an inhabited place where people had suffered and been happy. I had written a novel about the Jewish rising that took place there, an



The Engine-driver, Janov. Paul Hogarth

event as epic with heroism and courage as any in the crowded chapters of the war. When I wrote that book I had never seen the Ghetto streets and houses with my bodily eye, yet I had found it easier to visualise than when I stood on the actual stone and rubble out of which the Ghetto had been composed. Only one flower grew in all that wilderness, a sort of rock rose, wandered from God knows what green and quiet garden!

Listening to the music of Chopin, and thinking of that undefeated flower, I felt a profound reassurance in the rich potentialities of human civilisation. All over the world it would renew itself, like phoenix Poland, from the ashes of the past.



Kraków

Paul Hogarth

Great BRITAIN'S WONDER: LONDON'S^{O R} Admiration.

Being a True Representation of a Prodigious *FROST*, which began about the beginning of *Decemb. 1683*, and continued till the Fourth *Day of February* following. And held on with such violence, that Men and Beasts, Coaches and Carts, went as frequently thereon, as Boats were wont to pass before. There was also a Street of Booths built from the *Temple* to *Southwark*, where were sold all sorts of Good-imaginable, namely, Cloaths, Plate, Earthen Ware, Meat, Drink, Brandy, Tobacco, and a Hundred sorts of other Commodities not here inserted. It being the Wonder of this present Age, and a great confirmation to all the Spectators.



[British Museum]

MILLICENT ROSE

London's February Frost Fair

FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, EVERY GENERATION of Londoners was astonished and delighted, once in a lifetime, by the opportunity for Frost Fair. In a hard and sustained cold spell, old London Bridge, with its massive piers and narrow openings, would hold both stream and tide. The ice packed hard against the arches; above bridge a solid playground was created. And with the river, half the life of the city came to a standstill.

The surface of the ice was usually very rough, the tides having churned it to and fro for several days before it became firm. Dudley Ryder, "extremely struck with the sight", describes the river in

January, 1716: "It looks as if there had been a violent storm and it had froze the waves, just as they were jostling and beating against one another, and the billows and foam and white froth were grown stiff as they were at the height of their hurry."

The Thames watermen, those sturdy



ancestors of London's busmen, advanced into this rugged waste and took possession of it. Paths were cleared and strewn with cinders, and soon there was a street in mid-Thames. The traditional amusements of Frost Fair were begun immediately: eating, drinking, gambling, merry-go-rounds and dancing. Printing presses were brought on to the ice and there was always some animal to be roasted. The festivities were all of a popular character; the West End fashionables kept away.

Frost Fair with its rowdy fun was not a subject that appealed to Victorian chroniclers of London. But there is a lively account of the 1814 Fair in the

Everyday Book, published in the eighteen-twenties by the radical William Hone. It will stand as a portrait of all its kind.

"On Sunday the 30th of January, the immense masses of ice that floated from the upper parts of the river, in consequence of the thaw of the two preceding days, blocked up the Thames between Blackfriars and London Bridges. The frost of Sunday night so united the vast mass as to render it immovable by the tide.

"On Tuesday February 1st, the river presented a thoroughly solid surface over that part which extends from Blackfriars Bridge to some distance below Three Crane Stairs, at the bottom of Queen Street, Cheapside. The watermen placed notices at the end of all streets leading to the city side of the river, announcing a safe footway over, which attracted immense crowds, and in a short time thousands perambulated the rugged plain, where a variety of amusements were provided. Among the more curious of these was the ceremony of roasting a small sheep, or rather toasting or burning it over a coal fire, placed in a large iron pan. For a view of this extraordinary spectacle, sixpence was demanded and willingly paid. The delicate meat, when *done*, was sold at a shilling a slice, and termed *Lapland mutton*. . . .

"Wednesday February 2nd. The grand 'Mall' or walk now extended from Blackfriars Bridge to London Bridge. This was named City Road, and was lined on each side by persons of all descriptions. Eight or ten printing presses were erected and numerous pieces commemorative of the 'great frost' were printed on the ice. Some of these frosty typographers displayed considerable taste. . . .

"Thursday February 3rd. Swings, bookstalls, dancing in a barge, suttling-booths, playing at skittles, and almost every appendage of a fair on land, appeared now on the Thames. Thousands flocked to this singular spectacle of sports and pastimes. The ice seemed to be a solid rock, and presented a truly picturesque appearance. The view of St. Paul's and of the city with the white foreground had a very singular effect—in many parts mountains of ice upheaved resembled the rude interior of a stone quarry.

"Friday February 4th. Each day brought a fresh accession of 'pedlars to sell their wares', and the greatest rubbish of all sorts was raked up and sold at double and treble the original cost. . . . This afternoon, about five o'clock, three persons, an old man and two lads, were

on a piece of ice above London Bridge, which suddenly detached itself from the main body and was carried by the tide through one of the arches. They laid themselves down for safety, and the boatmen at Billingsgate put off to their assistance, and rescued them. One was able to walk, but the other two were carried, in a state of insensibility, to a public-house, where they received every attention their situation required.

"Many persons were on the ice till late at night, and the effect by *moonlight* was singularly novel and beautiful. The bosom of the Thames seemed to rival the frozen climes of the north.

"Saturday February 5th. . . . The wind had veered to the south . . . however there was still much life and bustle on the frozen element; the footpath in the centre of the river was hard and secure, and among the pedestrians were four donkies. . . . Gaming was carried on in all its branches, and some of the customers left the lures of Rouge et noir, Te-totum, Wheel of Fortune, etc. without a penny to pay the passage over the plank to the shore. The drinking tents were filled by females and their companions, dancing reels to the sound of fiddles, while others sat round large fires, drinking rum, grog and other spirits. Tea, coffee and eatables were provided in abundance. Several tradesmen, who at other times were deemed respectable, attended with their wares, and sold books, toys and trinkets of almost every description.

"Towards evening, the concourse thinned; rain began to fall, and the ice

to crack, and on a sudden it floated, with the printing presses, booths and merry-makers, to the no small dismay of publicans, typographers, shopkeepers and sojourners."

Hone relates a number of accidents, some fatal. The most extraordinary was to some men who were left in charge of a gin booth on the Saturday night. They became very drunk, then slept, and in the small hours of the Sunday morning awoke to find that the booth was now on a small floating island of ice. In their alarm they upset a candle, which set fire to their tent and its furniture. They managed to escape from the flaming ice floe and on to a lighter, which was carried up river by the tide, struck a pier of Blackfriars Bridge and was dashed to pieces. Watermen came to their rescue and they eventually succeeded in getting ashore with their lives.

On the Sunday, tide and thaw combined to carry away the whole fair-ground. "Thousands of disappointed persons thronged the banks, and many a 'prentice, and servant maid 'sighed unutterable things' at the sudden and unlooked-for destruction of Frost Fair."

Comparing Hone's account with the prints from several fairs, I find it notable that the two oxen and a sheep of Dudley Ryder's time have dwindled in 1814 to one "small" sheep, while bear-baiting has given place to shying at snuff-boxes placed on sticks. But merry go-rounds and swing-boats are much improved; the fair has lost none of its fun. It continues to be at once traditional and up-to-the-minute. In 1814 the weather reminded



Frost Fair, on the Thames, February 4, 1814.

[British Museum

Londoners of their Russian ally's victory over Napoleon the previous winter, and "Moscow" was a popular label for booths and their wares. Radical printers set up and sold leaflets extolling the freedom of the press.

The prints that commemorate these famous fairs are nearly all in the woodcut style used for chap-books and broadsheets. They have a naïve vitality that is most engaging, and the formalisation of trees and houses, tents and sledges,

the aptly silhouetted figures, are in their way both skilful and beautiful. Pasted above a mantelpiece in Southwark or Spitalfields, Bermondsey or Rattcliff,



PERCY HORTON

David: Artist of the French Revolution

THE WORK OF JACQUES LOUIS DAVID IS practically unrepresented in the public collections of this country and his reputation has suffered from misunderstanding and misrepresentation. It is greatly to the credit of the Director and Trustees of the Tate Gallery and the Arts Council that they have arranged with the French Government a loan of some of his pictures from the comprehensive exhibition with which the bi-centenary of his birth was celebrated in Paris and Versailles last summer. During the whole of December and for two weeks in January, visitors to the Tate were able to see at first hand what manner of artist he was. There was a time when it was fashionable for writers and critics to present the man as a blood-thirsty terrorist, and the artist as an imperious tyrant who imposed a narrow idea of classicism on the whole school of servile followers. In actual fact, none of the accusations made against David the man could be proved, and it was David the Art Dictator who broke the very real tyranny of the French Academy and passed on his inspiration to artists as different in aims and achievements as Gros, Ingres and Géricault. As a teacher, David declared that he wished to prepare his students to follow the natural inclination of their talents and not to work against them. Delacroix, in fact, could claim with justice that David was "the father of the modern school".

Prejudice dies hard, and it is not perhaps surprising to find even today a reluctance to recognise the merit of this great artist. The aesthetic fashions of the time do not encourage appreciation of a style of painting based on a virile humanism, and which—to quote Baudelaire—

—"is willing to sacrifice charm and dangerous seductions, living principally in mind and soul, painting as bitter and despotic as the Revolution from which it was born". The fact that David used his art to further the cause of the Revolution is alone enough to make his name anathema to the disciples of *l'art pour l'art*. It is not surprising, therefore, that in reference to this very exhibition one well-known critic has refused to admit that he was more than a journeyman painter.

Today it is possible to see David's work in perspective, and it is apparent beyond all doubt that his creative power and achievements were at their highest during the period when he was politically active as a member of the National Convention. It was during this time, when he was in daily contact with events and when his life, his art and his political convictions were completely integrated, that he produced the heroic *Death of Marat* and some of his most intense portraits.

When, a year after his imprisonment, he became the glorifier of Napoleon, he could no longer bring to his work a comparable passion and moral conviction. The *Sacre*, which owes much to *The Coronation of Catharine de Medici* by Rubens, and *The Distribution of the Eagles*, are brilliant *tours de force*, but compared with *The Oath of the Horatii*, which ushered in the French Revolution, and the *Marat*, they are theatrical in contrivance. The *Eagles*, indeed, with its startling foreshadowing of fascist showmanship, is both grandiose and rhetorical.

The great size of David's classical and historical paintings excluded them from this exhibition, but a good replica of the *Marat*—possibly by David himself—has

they must have been the delight of many a London worker's family.

In 1824-31 Rennie's bridge replaced the old one (which had already lost its houses and acquired a Georgian look in 1757). Today the Thames flows in such a way that the severest winter will not hold it up, while London's great annual fairs, St. Bartholomew's and Greenwich, were both suppressed about a hundred years ago. The conditions for Frost Fair no longer exist.

the noble gravity if not quite the intensity of expression of the original at Brussels.

It is as a portraitist, then, that David is chiefly represented at the Tate, and the choice of portraits is wide enough to show something of every phase of this side of the artist's work. Admirers of the painter would perhaps have liked to have seen at least one of the important large groups such as *The Conventionnel Gérard and his Family* or an epitome of the popular forces of the Revolution like *La Maraichère*. But it is impossible to be disappointed in an exhibition which includes both excellent examples of the fashionable elegance of the Directoire period (Madame Récamier and Monsieur and Madame Sériziat) and the brilliantly vivid Madame Chalgrin which has the passionate and instantaneous characterisation of the best portraits of the republican period. In quite another category is the portrait of Pope Pius VII, with which David inaugurated his appointment as "First Painter to the Emperor", but it is finely painted, while the early portraits of his father-in-law and mother-in-law, Monsieur Pécoul and Madame Pécoul—monuments in paint to contemporary bourgeois solidity and self assurance—are in a style which owes something to the baroque.

The predominating characteristic of David's portraits is their downright honesty. Concentration on the character of the sitter is pushed to the point of the most revealing psychological penetration, and his frankness spares no one—not even his wife. The plain backgrounds serve to emphasise the directness of a vision which is matched by an equally direct execution. The portraits of Madame

Récamier and Madame Chalgrin are rubbed in *premier coup* with a freshness of technique which reveals David's interest in Rubens.

The painter himself declared that his aim was truth, and in his best works this aim is pursued with unflagging vitality and an integrity which was an inspiration to the artists who came after him. He turned against what Delacroix called "the languor and feebleness of the shameful productions of the time in which he was born" and made of his art an expression of "the gathering strength, ideas of greatness, and popular liberty" of the French Revolution—embodying in his pictures its drive and moral force. And in doing so he bridged the gulf between the rococo decadence of the late 18th century and the realism of the early 19th century.

The joint support of the Arts Council and the committee of the City Art Gallery, Manchester, has made it possible for Manchester to see the exhibition, January 24th to February 14th.

The Death of Marat. J. L. David.



Reviews

BOOKS



NEW NOVELS

Reviewed by Iris Morley

CONCLUDING. Henry Green. (Hogarth Press, 8s. 6d.) THE INHABITANTS. Montagu Slater. (Bodley Head, 9s. 6d.) THE CORNER THAT HELD THEM. Sylvia Townsend Warner. (Chatto and Windus, 9s. 6d.)

IN THE TOPMOST CHAMBERS OF THE MOST select ivory towers the guardians of British culture sacrifice doves upon the altar of Henry Green—or so I am tolerably informed.

Unhappily, it has to be faced that Mr. Green's public will always be somewhat restricted, for, as a novelist, he is invariably obscure and sometimes unintelligible. The masses will never adore him, for at least seven out of every ten readers will ask exasperated, "But what is this book about?" However, this very obscurity is highly valued in some quarters and enables him to be, if not all things to all

men, at least simultaneously claimed as a teller of fairy tales and a great left-wing social satirist. Marxist politics and sensuous delight can be drawn forth in equal measure by the assiduous and determined reader.

Concluding, Mr. Green's latest work, obviously provides a full quota of sensuous delight. The Greuze-like forms of schoolgirls painted in a kind of diaphanous mass of sophisticated sensuality float across every page: preparing for a party, having a bath, falling out of trees, mysteriously disappearing, their presence, totally unreal, possibly intoxicating and underlined with what I can only describe as a sort of furtive nastiness, is all-pervasive. However, as regards the social satire, I imagine a few eyebrows must be raised in left-wing quarters for this scene of a future when all is owned by the State is depicted with an unqualified disgust worthy of Aldous Huxley. The usual inhabitants of Mr. Green's great houses, aristocrats and servants, are much more warmly and sympathetically corrupt than these monsters of state bureaucracy. Yet it is the social relations of the past which haunt Mr. Green's "future". The two Headmistresses of the State school have all the greed and cunning of upper servants reflected in

another mirror, though in the translation they have, as they said in the 17th century, lost their bowels.

The girls and the lonely individualistic scientist are the aristocrats now helpless and at their mercy: a reversal which makes the peculiar horror of this Brave New World. Mr. Green loves great houses; the delicate clusters of his phraseology garland the trees, the flowers, the light, even if it seldom illuminates the extraordinary jigsaw puzzle of his meaning. No sooner are we dazzled by the trees in the moonlight than we are brought up full stop by an inexplicable pig with a shoe tied round its neck. For me, at least, this is the weakness and fraudulence of Mr. Green as a novelist. Fighting my way out of the coils of illusion all I want to know is: What *did* happen to Mary? It is his business to tell us and he doesn't.

After Mr. Green it is a relief to turn to Montagu Slater, though his new book, *The Inhabitants*, is not his best. However, Mr. Slater can at least be understood. He writes in a terse, vivid prose which compels attention, but this story of a brilliant society woman's conversion *via* Yorkshire and the East End garment trade to a state of social consciousness never becomes quite real. There are

patches of richness in the novel like good loam in a sandy soil, sudden vivid encounters which linger in the memory, but these are only background for the central figure, a fusion of Beatrice Webb and Margot Asquith.

However, to use incidents from the lives of these two formidable women is not enough; the former was famous through her work, the latter for her conversational powers, but in neither respect does Mr. Slater's Bridget shine. Consequently we cannot accept the essential point of her brilliance, and if we are not convinced of the exceptional talents of such a woman how can we have any patience with her? The balls, the princely admirers, the dressing for Ascot, the flights at dawn, the plunges into poverty take on a certain Ouida-like unreality, and then there is that unfortunate philosophic conclusion. "Guy says the inhabitants are divided into two classes, the guilty and the cheerful. We prefer to join the cheerful class if they'll have us . . . and if we don't really belong we can go on trying." Obviously she might just as well have stayed in the Royal Enclosure. . . .

Finally, we come with very great pleasure to Sylvia Townsend Warner. Her irony and her spare undecorated prose give us an assurance of great reserves of power, which I think only once, in her novel *Summer Will Show* did she fully display. In this new historical novel, *The Corner That Held Them*, her capacities are, as it were, kept well banked down, deliberately subdued to the same key as the flat, silvery waterlands which are the scene of the story. She tells the history of a nunnery during the 14th century, and traces with something of the pure exact colours of a piece of embroidery the lives of the nuns who make up this small community.

This is the story of the "ordinary nun", and the skill and scholarship of the author shows us the exact place of the religious house in feudal society: both its good and useful aspects as a refuge where the minor arts and crafts were nurtured and (in the period) its growing reactionary role as a greedy and incompetent landlord. In the same way the lives of the inhabitants respond to this dualism; the nun often had more opportunity to develop and use her gifts than her lay sister and she presumably attained more independence in community life than she would have done in marriage, yet the limitations of this carefully guarded freedom made her susceptible to nervous disorders and superstitious terrors. The perfectly happy nun, we feel, must always have been the rich, clever and irreligious woman.

If we dare to be so ungenerous as to criticise this interesting work, it is on the grounds that in scrupulously tracing the events of her chronicle Miss Townsend Warner allows the individuality of her characters to be submerged. Figures in a tapestry are repetitions, they exist only in relation to the general pattern and it has to be admitted that the various prioresses of Oby tend to vanish in this fashion. Isobel, Alicia, Johanna, Matilda . . . names which tantalise us with their evocation of a vanished life. But the candle blows out, the cloisters are dark and the record dust.

PERSONAL PREFERENCES

By Fred Urquhart

THE SHORT STORY: Sean O'Faolain.
Collins, 10s. 6d.

MY FIRST AND MAIN QUARREL WITH THIS book is the title. Every writer has a perfect right to say exactly what he thinks about any subject. But it seems to me that Mr. O'Faolain has led his readers up the garden path with this volume. I expected something quite different—for instance, I hoped it would be along the lines of H. E. Bates' book of the same title, with Mr. O'Faolain's personal remarks and findings—but it isn't. I expected this all the more because the blurb says: "Writer and reader alike will gain fresh insight into a delicate and characteristic art of our time from this finely wrought and comprehensive study."

"Comprehensive" is quite the wrong word. It is a most irritating book, and I'm not sure that my spleen isn't so great that I may be incapable of reviewing it with sufficient objectivity. Not that Mr. O'Faolain himself is objective. His taste is a very personal one and seems to lean more to stories of the 19th century—and especially to French writers—than to short-story writers of the present day. Naturally, each writer, and reader, has his own likes and dislikes, but there are certain names in the history of the short story which cannot be ignored. Yet Mr. O'Faolain ignores them! He makes no mention, for instance, of Katherine Mansfield. And there is only one brief and disparaging reference to Somerset Maugham. Whatever one may think of Maugham's later work, one must hand it to him that he was a short-story writer of great brilliance. Apropos his main theme that "the secret of masterpieces lies in the concordance between the subject and the temperament of the author," Mr. O'Faolain says that probably Maugham would sniff furiously at this and say: "I am content to entertain." Well, that seems to me to be not a bad objective. It's one, anyway, that Mr. O'Faolain might have thought about when writing this book.

His list of the first twelve or fifteen "most interesting writers of short stories in English" is: James Joyce, George Moore, Liam O'Flaherty, Elizabeth Bowen, Frank O'Connor, Lord Dunsany, H. E. Bates,

A. E. Coppard, V. S. Pritchett, Ernest Hemingway, William Saroyan, Ring Lardner, John Steinbeck and Eudora Welty. A number of these names are all right; they're the ones most critics would have mentioned. Personally, I take exception to only one of them. Is George Moore generally regarded as a short-story writer? One can forgive Mr. O'Faolain for his natural bias towards Irish writers, but one can hardly forgive his omissions. He does not mention the Welsh writers who have given so much to the short-story—Rhys Davies, Caradoc Evans, Gwyn Jones and Glyn Jones. Nor does he mention L. A. G. Strong, Stella Benson, H. A. Manhood, Algernon Blackwood, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Leslie Halward, T. F. Powys and T. O. Beachcroft, who—whether you like their work or not—have all written stories which must be taken into account. He devotes a few lines to William Sansom, alone of the very modern school of story-writers, but no mention is made of Sid Chaplin, Mary Lavin, Denton Welch, Diana Gardner, J. Maclaren-Ross and Elisabeth Berridge, to say nothing of all the other young writers who are now making their mark in this medium. And why did he not include among his Irish writers, James Stephens and Norah Hoult? Each of them, though primarily a poet and novelist, has written short stories which can stand beside anything ever written by Alphonse Daudet. Personally, I would not exchange any one story out of Miss Hoult's *Poor Women* for the whole of *Lettres de Mon Moulin*.

Early in the book Mr. O'Faolain says: "I suppose no university in Britain thinks the short story other than a modern toy." And then he goes on to prove that he also thinks the same! For the bulk of his book is concerned with the work of Alphonse Daudet, Guy de Maupassant and Anton Chekov, with Henry James and R. L. Stevenson as runners-up.

There is a long essay on Daudet. Mr. O'Faolain keeps saying that Daudet's short stories are the greatest things he ever wrote; that his *Lettres de Mon Moulin* will live long after his novels and plays are dead. He tells us how bad the novels and plays are, and he keeps quoting from them and telling us their plots. He insists every now and then, in case we have forgotten, that Daudet's short stories are masterpieces. But it takes him twenty-seven and a half pages to discuss Daudet's novels and plays and his wife's influence on him, and to quote extensively (mostly in French) from *Mme. Daudet's* works before at last—by which time at least one reader's patience was completely exhausted—he dismisses the short stories in four and a half pages.

Now, this essay on Daudet is excellent. But surely it is out of place in a book supposed to be on the art of the short story?

The essays on Maupassant and Chekov are also brilliant, and I wish Mr. O'Faolain had thought fit to publish them in a book of another title. But I must admit that I got a bit tired of reading quotations from Chekov's stories. I also got very bored

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with quotations from and details of the plot of Elizabeth Bowen's *Her Table Spread*. It's a very good story, but I feel it was sufficient for Mr. O'Faolain to print it with the seven other stories at the end of the book.

These eight stories, which he considers masterpieces of their kind, are a curious collection. Personally, I have never thought of Robert Louis Stevenson as an exponent of the short story, and certainly after reading *The Sire de Maletroit's Door*, I think even less. It has everything which the modern writer of short stories tries to avoid—especially wordiness. Mr. O'Faolain is at fault himself in this respect; his study is over-written and far too discursive. In fairness to him he does admit that he may have used too many words, but as this apology appears on page 191 it is rather late in the day to warn the reader. He also says that the book is a personal and prejudiced one, so possibly I may have been a little viperish in my remarks.

Apart from the personal prejudices, which after all are Mr. O'Faolain's own, there are a few mistakes. I am no Chauvinist, but I think Mr. O'Faolain might have been more careful than to call Sir Walter Scott an English writer. And in detailing the plot of Maupassant's *La Parure*, the necklace at one time is called "the diamonds," at another "the pearls."

Although one does not think of Henry James as a short-story writer (being far too wordy for this medium) it is interesting to find his *The Real Thing* printed in full with Mr. O'Faolain's proposed cuts (in square brackets) to bring its length from ten thousand words to four thousand. One wonders what the ghost of the Master would say!

Or have I said enough to satisfy him?

SHORTER NOTICES

HERBERT MORRISON, by Maurice Edelman. *Lincolns-Prager Publishers, Ltd.*, 7s. 6d.

DESCRIBED AS A PICTORIAL BIOGRAPHY, THIS short account of the life of the Lord President contains a good deal of interesting material, from Morrison's early life as a half-blind child in the poor quarter of Brixton, enduring the taunts of other children, to a picture of Morrison in top hat and tails, jauntily entering Buckingham Palace.

CAESAR'S MISTRESS, THE B.B.C. ON TRIAL, by Wing-Commander Geoffrey Cooper, M.P. *Venture Publications, Ltd.*, 3s. 6d.

A COMPARISON WITH CIRCUMSTANCEA, JULIUS Caesar's mistress, who founded the first broadcasting company, makes an amusing opening to this account of the Report on the methods and control of the B.B.C. The correspondence relating to the M.G.M. case, and the inquiry into song-plugging, is aired, together with other evidence collected from all over the world.

THE SECRET OF THE ENGLISH, by Jean Bailhache. *Quality Press, Ltd.*, 6s.

M. JEAN BAILHACHE IS A TEACHER IN PARIS. He has speculated at length on how Britain achieved "the miracle of 1940," and gives us his conclusions in this witty book, in which he illustrates his theory by an entertaining analysis of the Englishman's daily habits.

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CINEMA



FILM NOTES

By Michael Clarke

THE LAST TWO MONTHS HAVE SEEN technical innovations of the first importance in cinema. Yet, looking at the sorry condition of the British film industry today, with a quarter of its technicians unemployed and a growing proportion of its studios idle, one is bound to wonder whether any technical improvements alone can better either the quality of British films or the economic welfare of the industry. The two novelties, Hitchcock's so-called ten-minute take, and the practice known as Independent Frame, both have an economic origin: they are intended to save time, and in film-making time is always worth a lot of money.

"Rope" is the first example to be seen in Britain of the long take technique. The whole action of a film, in this method, is covered in some ten to fifteen shots, each lasting a maximum of about ten minutes. The camera wanders about the set, tracking and craning from one character to another; while the whole dramatic construction of each scene rests almost entirely upon dialogue and acting. It will be seen that one of the chief features of the film medium, its power to move rapidly from long shot to close, to build emphasis by the choice of rapidly juxtaposed and different shots, is lost in this technique. The camera can of course move in three dimensions; but the sudden changes which in the past have been the main element in dramatic construction are not possible. The

simple dialectic of editing disappears, while new, unnecessary problems arise: how to justify, by some pretext of plot, the relatively slow travel of the camera from person to person, how to maintain suspense, how to ensure an even and high quality of acting for eight or ten minutes—acting slighter and more subtly restrained than stage work, and thus infinitely more tiring.

Films of this kind are probably quicker to make than the orthodox type, and no doubt the medium could theoretically have its masterpieces. But the limitations of the edited film, which in fact give so much more power and scope, are as yet not even fully worked out; the art of the film is still very young. It is odd to read Hitchcock's articles of ten years ago; in a well-known passage from *Footnotes to the Film*, he describes how he likes "to photograph just the little bits of a scene that I really need. . . . I want to put my film together on the screen, not simply to photograph something that has been put together already in the form of a long piece of stage acting. This is what gives an effect of life to a picture."

Independent Frame is a different form of rationalisation which is now being explored in the Rank Organisation. Its first principle is that planning and staff work are of prime importance; this long overdue admission may block up some of the obvious sources of waste. But the planning goes deep, goes haywire one might say, if one forgot for a moment that film-making is an industry. Everything is done to make the actual shooting of the story as smooth and fast as possible. Exterior and foreign locations are, if possible, completely avoided, as far as the cast is concerned, by the extensive use of high-quality back-projection. Against the projected Alps, desert, or what you will, the action is played in the studio. Sets are prefabricated in large, readily-movable units, or even made as models which are photographed and then back-projected in the usual way. The final aim is to light almost every scene in such a way that it can be satisfactorily photographed by several cameras at once; the director, by using a television control panel, can adopt the viewpoint of which ever camera he chooses.

The scene is probably held in mid- or long-shot from two angles, and in somewhat greater detail by other cameras; during rehearsals the director, by a flick of a knob, can "edit" the scene as it is played.

By this means, as in



the Hitchcock method, fairly lengthy scenes can be photographed in one shot; afterwards the editor has a choice of viewpoints to play with. Time is saved in repeating scenes, or parts of them, from different angles and distances; and it is these changes of camera position, requiring relighting and set dressing, that make things slow.

There is not much hint here, either, of photographing simply the elements of the scene which are dramatically required. But it must be remembered that some of the most revered directors shoot most scenes entire in long-shot, mid-shot and close-up, always giving the editor "savers" to help him in assembling the product. Independent Frame only streamlines the process. The one element that seems to be forgotten is the creative act of scripting a film, conceiving it in the mind in advance, knowing the way it is intended to fall together, and shooting only what is needed. Directors are already almost exclusively concerned with acting; they have their editor and their continuity girl to tell them whether one shot will cut with another. And now acting is explicitly put at a premium, at the expense of editing construction. Yet it is editing, ever since somebody first cut back from cowboys to Indians, which has made the film an artistic, not merely a reproductive medium.

But these remarks are irrelevant to the purpose of the innovations, which are designed to cut costs. This is the most-discussed problem of the industry today, for films are far too expensive. They can never be cheap, for they involve complex technical work and equipment, and they require either large capital or heavy borrowing. The trade Press will tell you, however, that it is the cost of technicians' labour that is driving the British industry bankrupt. In fact, the rates now secured by the unions are high, and correctly so. Most film workers have no security beyond the immediate job they are engaged for, and often are employed for only a small fraction of the year. Today, as more studios close and the unemployed list grows longer, security dwindles still further.

The producers' organisation has given notice that it will terminate the present union agreement in three months. It is no doubt hoped that many of the technicians already desperate for jobs will then act as a black labour force, working at any rate that may be offered them. But such an attempt to cripple the trade unions in the industry will not succeed; capitalism, as always, is forced by its inner dynamic into campaigns that are bound to fail.

These are the problems that dominate

film-making at the moment, and on their solution depends the future art of the film in Britain.

Of current films, "Rope" and "Warning to Wantons" are interesting because they exemplify the new techniques mentioned above, though neither piece is distinguished. From a mediocre batch, "Once a Jolly Swagman" stands out for its real and important theme, coupled to the exciting documentary background of the dirt-track. The Powell-Pressburger version of "The Small Back Room" puts an important novel on to film in the unique, if sometimes unpalatable manner characteristic of this team. But Carol Reed's "The Fallen Idol", now being shown in the provinces, sets a standard of technique, acting and direction which, it seems, is hard to emulate.

THEATRE



CHILDREN'S CORNER

By Eric Capon

A FATHER TOLD ME THE OTHER DAY THAT his nine-year-old son had just seen his first stage-play. He was, of course, captivated, and, said his father, on his return home discussed the effect of seeing actors in the round as if it was some great technical advance on the film!

The play in question was *The Snow Queen* of Hans Andersen, which the Young Vic were presenting at the old Waterloo-rd. theatre. Otherwise this Christmas there was just the usual fare, the pantomimes, *Peter Pan*, *Where the Rainbow Ends*, *Land of Christmas Stocking*, *Treasure Island*, *Wizard of Oz*, some "magic" by Maskelyne, and two circuses at Olympia and Harringay. The Vic's show was unique in that it was the only one to come from a theatre not only solely intended for children but also one that functions all the year round and isn't just a safe throw-on for the Christmas holidays.

We have at least two of these professional full-time children's theatres now, the Young Vic and Glyndebourne, and I have seen many of their shows and must confess while applauding their existence and insisting on their necessity, often to have had grave doubts as to their approach. They almost always seemed far too



tied to the classroom and to cater almost exclusively for the older age-groups. Of course, I am prejudiced, having younger children, but surely the seven years from four to eleven are even more vital than the next seven when adolescence begins to despise anything labelled "For Children Only." Surely, that sense of wonder, of creative imagination and of spontaneous delight is never so strong as in those early years. If the first, fine careless rapture of the theatre is to be captured, that is the time.

I am aware that these theatres have found means of survival only by support from the Local Education Authorities, who normally engage the company and provide the audiences. Yet apart from the rather questionable influence on choice of play this also means that, faced with touring conditions of the most exacting kind, and playing usually in halls rather than theatres, these companies can only take the most primitive settings. The result is essentially adult plays like *Tobias and the Angel* and *Androcles and the Lion*, and classics such as *As You Like It* and *Everyman*, only sketchily put on.

Yes, I know the difficulties, but I keep thinking of the children's theatres I have seen in other countries; of those in Moscow and Leningrad—and to show that this is not a political matter—of those in America. At the Goodman in Chicago and later in Seattle, I saw children's plays that seemed really to be children's plays, beautifully mounted, because in each case the theatre was their permanent home. I have on my shelves now at least a dozen good children's plays which I collected in the States (one even by Thurber), but with little hope of ever seeing them staged here. They are all imaginative, but none of them will help any child to pass an exam.

These strictures are occasioned by the *Snow Queen*, not as an example but as the Great exception. Here at last in this country was a children's theatre really doing a children's play, and doing it very well, though the settings still reflected the touring conditions for which they had been designed.

Surely it should be possible in London at least to found a permanent Children's Theatre. The Americans usually do it in conjunction with some adult theatre. Don't those Odeon Saturday mornings indicate a need and possibly hint at a solution? Certainly a theatre, like the Bristol Old Vic, with a school attached, both should and could do this, using their students; but in London there is surely a huge potential audience which could almost support a full-time venture.

Once such a basis is established which is permanent, even if the productions are occasional, then very great care must be

taken with the presentation. Children have a love of colour and respond quickly to it. I shall always recall the pleasure of a four-year-old when seeing *The Glass Slipper* (which should be revived incidentally, especially Hugo Stevenson's lovely settings) some years ago. Then the choice of play must forget the school or perhaps the Education Authorities, for the intelligent teacher will welcome a real children's theatre. Surprising things will be found, such as a recent discovery of mine that Gogol's *Marriage* was the almost perfect comedy for a seven-year-old, the plot being simple and the humour largely visual. But most of the plays must be written specially. An adult play given a slightly different slant, or an adapted classic are not enough. If it must be a classic, then *Huckleberry Finn* rather than *Great Expectations*.

Of the other children's shows this Christmas I must make a partial retraction in the case of *Peter Pan*, though the settings could do with a clean-up, or better still, some new designs. But this is, as I found by taking several children to it this year, still the most artfully contrived fantasy. Maybe some children do echo the little boy who is reported to have replied to Peter's statement that a fairy dies whenever a child disbelieves in them. "Well, I don't, and there's another one gone"! But most succumb to the strongest identification with the characters and situations. This year's production has a very good Peter in Joan Hopkins. *The Wizard of Oz* has its attractions too for children, particularly in its skilful blending of magic with mechanics. I would like to have seen *Treasure Island*, and did go with children to a play announced as "for children of all ages" which was *The Pair of Spectacles* at the Arts. I began to wonder in the first interval if it wasn't a mistake, but must confess that I found the fantasy of the change of heart appearing in a disguised but recognisable form some weeks later, so it must have had an effect.

Pantomimes, I obstinately hold, are not really for children any more, though they like the knockabout element. But the absence, or thinness, of the story often confuses and sometimes irritates them. Pantomimes are still based on the good old stories, of course, but what Farjeon did for Cinderella in *The Glass Slipper* should also be done for *Aladdin*, *Puss in Boots* and the others.

Finally come the circuses with their own undying appeal. I wonder how children would react to performances in what the Americans call arena-type stages. It might be worth trying as an experiment. At least one wouldn't have to wait till next Christmas before a child could visit the theatre again.

RADIO



ORIGINALITY AND ADAPTATION

By James Page

A FULL WEEK OF BROADCASTING IS MADE up from many components. Music, stories, drama, news and propaganda are all combined in three main programmes to make up over 260 hours of broadcasting per week in this country alone. With one exception all these forms of expression are old forms modified by a new technique. Verbal and printed news and propaganda are as old as civilisation. Story-telling and music are ancient arts that have been developing for thousands of years. But radio drama is new. It has no counterpart in the art-forms that existed more than twenty-seven years ago. It pertains exclusively to the technique of wireless and is essentially in its infancy. Therefore, since the B.B.C. has a complete monopoly of broadcasting in this country, one of its primary duties is to develop and exploit the possibilities of this new art-form.

What then is the stated policy of the B.B.C. drama department? The Year Book gives it. First to maintain a high level of acting and of technical interpretation. This should be assumed as a first necessity. Next, to make available a regular series of classical plays of established international repute. The World Theatre series is quoted as an attempt to do this. Next, "To encourage interested authors to write plays conceived specially in terms of the broadcasting medium." And finally, the last three points are concerned, like the second point, with the adaptation of novels, stories and plays to the medium of radio. Note therefore that nowhere does the B.B.C. state its intention of deliberately pursuing a constructive policy of experiment in the new medium.

The third point, while in theory encouraging new authors, says nothing of how this is to be done, and suggests no way in which new writers can discover and improve the technique of writing for radio. In actual fact, the corporation tends more and more to use its own staff of writers for new scripts and although I can find no stated policy to this effect, the experience of many potential script-writers suggests that such a policy is being deliberately pursued.

In addition to this fact, it is becoming

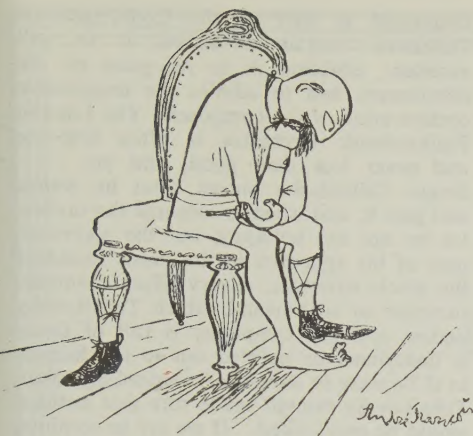
more and more apparent that radio drama is in the doldrums. The proportion of radio adaptations to original work grows daily greater, and the serious listener finds it more difficult than ever to find something worthwhile to listen to.

Let us look a little closer into this business of adaptations. First of all, there is a fairly strong case for the broadcasting of good radio versions of great plays. To many millions, the theatre is a rare treat, and the works of the classic writers and of the more important modern playwrights would be simply lost to the vast majority of the population were it not for the B.B.C. While this is true, it is important to realise that it is far more a criticism of the set-up of the theatre in this country than a justification for radio adaptations. So long as such broadcasts are used to whet the appetite and so create the demand for more theatres, so long will they be doing the theatre a service; but as soon as they begin to *replace* the theatre, they perform a reactionary role, and lead to stagnation in both the theatre and the B.B.C.

It is more important to realise that, in fact, radio adaptations rarely present a play very favourably. For one thing, the technique of adaptation is at the moment more or less standardised, and so radio versions tend to level out the difference between good and bad stage plays. Secondly, good theatre obviously entails good use of the theatrical medium, and this, of course, involves visual effect. So many great plays must be *seen* to be effective. Physical situations and occurrences are essential to most, and with the best will in the world, the creators of sound effects cannot expect to compete with actuality. Thirdly, only the greatest playwrights have written dialogue that can paint characters unaided by gesture, make-up, facial expression and all that goes towards stage "presence". This, incidentally, is the reason why the vast majority of plays in Drama Department's output, though really quite entertaining on the boards, are sheer nonsense on the air.

Though no one would pretend that such plays as *The Governess*, *Fools Rush In*, *The New Morality* and others of their type are great plays, yet they play quite well in the theatre. On the radio, however, they have literally nothing to commend them other than that they provide employment to a number of artists!

Novels and stories are another source for radio plays. There is less excuse for their use than for the use of stage plays, since libraries and cheap editions make it possible for almost everyone to experience them as they were originally written. Paradoxically enough, however, they adapt more easily than plays. Since,



written in cold print they leave the reader to imagine his own actuality, there is no primary objection to their translation into a medium which does not involve vision. However, many novelists achieve much of their best effect with the high quality of their descriptive prose, and this is not easily transferred to the spoken word and sound effects. Music is usually invoked to take its place, but by the time both the composer and the listener have used their imagination to achieve a sensation two removes from the original, there is little chance of the writer's own intentions being retained. Books such as Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* may make entertaining listening, but in this case the final result was far, far away from Max's original if only because his exquisite prose had to be almost entirely lost.

It is interesting to note here that while plays and novels are adapted to radio, I can remember no case where the reverse has taken place. Does this not show that only the lack of new material and the necessity for filling the gap caused by too few theatres make radio adaptations so large a part of the B.B.C.'s dramatic output? Surely the transference of a work of art from one medium to another can only be justified when something new and worthwhile is thus obtained. When the result is merely a pale shadow of the former work of art there is no excuse.

The growing tendency of the B.B.C. to concentrate on adaptations for their main dramatic output has another unfortunate effect. When listeners find that they can scrape an acquaintance with the classics or the theatre by being spoonfed on the radio with no effort from themselves beyond turning a switch, they not only never experience great books and plays in the original, but they also cease to clamour for new works of art in the new medium. Consequently the B.B.C. adopts a complacent attitude and continues along its unadventurous path.

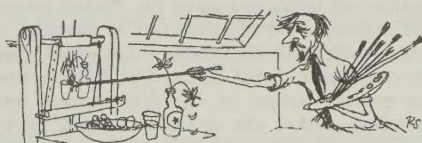
There is some progress being made in

real radio, however, and for this we have Features Dept. to thank. Fortunately a few original minds are at work there, and since the material for features is largely topical or historical but not already expressed in an art-form, it of necessity receives original treatment. As a result experiments are continually being made—not in a planned way, but being made none the less. The series, *The Undefeated* and *The Inward Eye* have contributed some interesting examples in this respect, particularly in the property that radio has, of expressing inwards thoughts and convictions. *Imaginary Conversations* and *Return Journey* are two other series that have attracted writers of great skill and that have shown the flexibility that lies at the root of all good radio.

Too many writers fail to realise that, dealing as it does with undimensional sounds, radio is capable of extreme and sudden changes of place and mood, and of expressing action and ideas that have no position in space. For example, radio offers great opportunity for fantasy since there is no limit of actual probability imposed on the writer. He can use effects, music and words to conjure up almost every image or situation that he requires. Far from being restricted by the use of sound only, radio is freed by this very property from all the conventional restrictions of space and time and colour.

That this is not recognised is shown by the fact that often the average broadcast openly asks the listener to imagine this or that visual effect—as though a painter were to apply smells to a canvas depicting roses. However, so long as simple adaptations made to a formula continue to form a large part of the B.B.C.'s dramatic output, and so long as listeners are content to hear works whose content is really second-hand, so long will the present dearth of original radio drama continue.

ART



SMALL PICTURES AT SMALL PRICES

By Carol Weight

THE ARTISTS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION should be congratulated for organising a really delicious little exhibition at 15, Lisle Street, entitled *Small Pictures at Small Prices*.

It contains some 66 paintings, ranging in price from one guinea to fifteen. The organisers and the artists have combined to offer the man in the street this opportunity of possessing original works of art. Here the modest art patron can buy works of the well established and the unknown painter. He can measure the quality of the latter against good examples of the work of such artists as Julian Trevelyan, Claude Rogers, Fred Uhlman, Edwin La Dell and William Townsend. He can play the intriguing game of picking the Sutherlands and Pipers of tomorrow.

I indulged in this game too, of selecting twenty pounds worth of pictures for my own house, and finally selected four charming things.

Art patronage is undergoing a great change. There are no longer many collectors who can buy pictures costing a hundred pounds, but in their place is a much larger public which can sometimes afford to buy pictures for fifteen pounds. They are not to be found exclusively in Mayfair, but more often turn out to be very humble folk who live in Tooting or Wandsworth, who buy pictures for no better reason than that they like them. Let them have every opportunity to get what they want, let them have lots more exhibitions like this one. Let them have art galleries in their own districts where pictures may be bought more cheaply than in Bond Street. Pile carpets, gilt and red plush do not add to the qualities of a picture.

Do not think, however, that this is in any way an attack on the West End galleries. Their value is very great indeed. It would be a bad thing if the artist devoted his entire energies to producing small pictures at small prices. His scope would be very much restricted. In an age of small flats and small incomes, painting already tends too much to become trivial, narrowly domestic, a bric-a-brac of little landscapes and little flower pieces. This exhibition clearly testifies that crowds of artists, known and unknown, can produce charming trifles, but how many of them can produce a sustained work of art?

RICHARD WILSON AND HIS CIRCLE

By Stephen Bone

WHEN GOING ROUND THE EXHIBITION OF pictures by Richard Wilson and his Circle, that has just been brought from Birmingham to the Tate, it is entertaining to imagine oneself a connoisseur of the eighteenth century. One would have been educated in the classics, acquainted with the pleasure city of Venice and the ruins of Rome, and the art of the landscape painter would have seemed a pleasant art but a minor one compared to that of the painter of "history-pictures." One would have admired very highly Claude Lorraine's painting, *The Enchanted Castle*, as well as a Salvator Rosa and a Gaspard Poussin, for these were dead artists whose reputations had been solidly established for many years. But the eighteenth century connoisseur would also

have admired work by living artists—Zuccarelli for instance, who was less correct than Claude but had an agreeable lightness and fancy; Joseph Vernet, who lived in Rome at home to every English tourist, a painter of contemporary life but one who contrived, nevertheless, a lively semi-classicism; George Barrett, the clever Irishman, who gave his English (even his Irish) scenes a slight air of Claude.

"But what have we here?" he might well ask. "This exhibition appears to be in honour of that old librarian at the Royal Academy, a heavy, obstinate old Englishman (or Welshman if you prefer it) whose style is bare and unadorned with none of the graceful charm of Zuccarelli or the classic correctness of Claude! It is true he had in early life considerable success as a painter of portraits, but none of those are here, only his tedious landscapes."

On one important point the modern critic and the eighteenth century critic would agree. The Claude is a masterpiece. But today Gaspard Poussin and Salvator Rosa are admired rather tepidly, Zuccarelli seems trivial, and George Barrett a very minor artist. Neglected, cantankerous Wilson now seems almost as great a man as Claude; his bare unadorned style is more to our taste than restless niggling, his best compositions are seen to have complete coherence and tremendous strength, and his preoccupation with effects of light and atmosphere can be appreciated in a way impossible in his own time.

But perhaps we should not be too patronising to the eighteenth century connoisseurs who failed to appreciate Wilson. It may well be that today there is some unfashionable elderly artist whose present obscurity will be a matter of wonder to our grandchildren. And Wilson had a few admirers even in his own time who did what they could to help him. To some extent he has always been "a painter's painter," for only those who have themselves messed about with oil paints can appreciate to the full the superb sureness of his technique. One can pile up adjectives indefinitely; John Constable used five, all apt. "I recollect nothing so much," he wrote in a letter in 1823, "as a large, solemn, bright, warm, fresh landscape by Wilson." If only Wilson could have heard this praise! But he had been dead forty years.

The Birmingham City Art Gallery and the Tate are to be congratulated. The first for organising the show, and the second for bringing it to London.



RECORDS



By Thomas Sharp

DECCA K2042-2046. BARTOK: *Concerto for Orchestra*.

ONLY THE FINEST RECORDING COULD DO anything for this work. Bela Bartok so intimately combined his musical thought with the instrumentation in which it is clothed, that without the instantly recognisable tone-quality of each instrument, and of each combination of instruments, many of the essentials would have been lost. Let me say at once that everyone concerned in the production of these discs has earned full marks. The Concertgebouw Orchestra we know from its visits to London, Edinburgh and elsewhere; Eduard van Beinum we are beginning to know now that he has settled in London; and Decca recording at its best requires no introduction and little further praise. This is magnificent sound reproduction, which gives all that the composer demanded in the highly complicated score. It is Bartok we know least of all, but here, surely, is the way to become acquainted with one side of his fascinating genius. This *Concerto* is full of originality, but is yet not difficult to approach. Begin first by listening to the Orchestra, without worrying too much about what it says. Follow the wealth of instrumental sonority, the sometimes queer combinations, the myriad delicate touches which remind us of a painter's palette. Gradually, the form and the meaning of the music will emerge. Here you have hours of delight, profitable as education, but first-rate entertainment at the same time.

DECCA K2071. SCHUBERT: *Rosamunde Overture*.

THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IS LESS well treated on this record. The reproduction has nothing like the same qualities of clarity and definition as in the Bartok series, and although the orchestration is classical, it is more difficult to follow. Added to this, the conductor, Josef Krips, just fails to find the precise tempo in the fast section and therefore makes the orchestra sound heavy and unrhythmic. This is a pity, for the players do as well as possible in the circumstances.

DECCA K2036-2041. TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 5*.

IT TAKES SO MANY PEOPLE TO MAKE A successful symphonic record, that the wonder is that we are satisfied so often. If the reproduction here is not quite so dis-

tinguished as that of the Concertgebouw Orchestra mentioned above, it is still excellent, enabling us to recognise all the instruments and to admire the imaginative orchestration of the composer. The London Philharmonic Orchestra is often first-rate and never less than good, and yet . . . Sergiu Celibidache knows what he wants, and gets it, and when it concerns the orchestra we are not unhappy, but the waywardness of his approach to the music threatens the whole structure. Every effect, dramatic, romantic or sentimental, which Tchaikovsky makes, and this symphony is full of them, is underlined or pointed out to the listener as if he were in danger of overlooking them. Tchaikovsky himself made sure that nothing would be overlooked. If we are to continue hearing these symphonies, and there's no reason against it if people go on from there, let us have them without the intervention of another highly romantic personality. Tchaikovsky's purple passages need no heightening.

DECCA K2060-2065. SCHUBERT: *Octet in F major*.

THESE RECORDS GAVE ME LESS PLEASURE than I had anticipated. It is, perhaps, one of Schubert's less inspired works, and the combination of five strings with clarinet, bassoon and horns poses many problems of balance and tonal blend. But although the players of the Vienna Octet give, in general, fine instrumental performances, they rarely persuade one that they approach the work as a piece of chamber-music. The strings fail to create the magic effect of a string quartet even when playing alone, and the entry of the other instruments dispels any such suggestion. The horn, in particular, is tubby and elephantine in execution, as the wide-bore instrument can be made to sound only too readily. The reproduction is below Decca's normal standard, and criticisms of the playing may be due in part to this.

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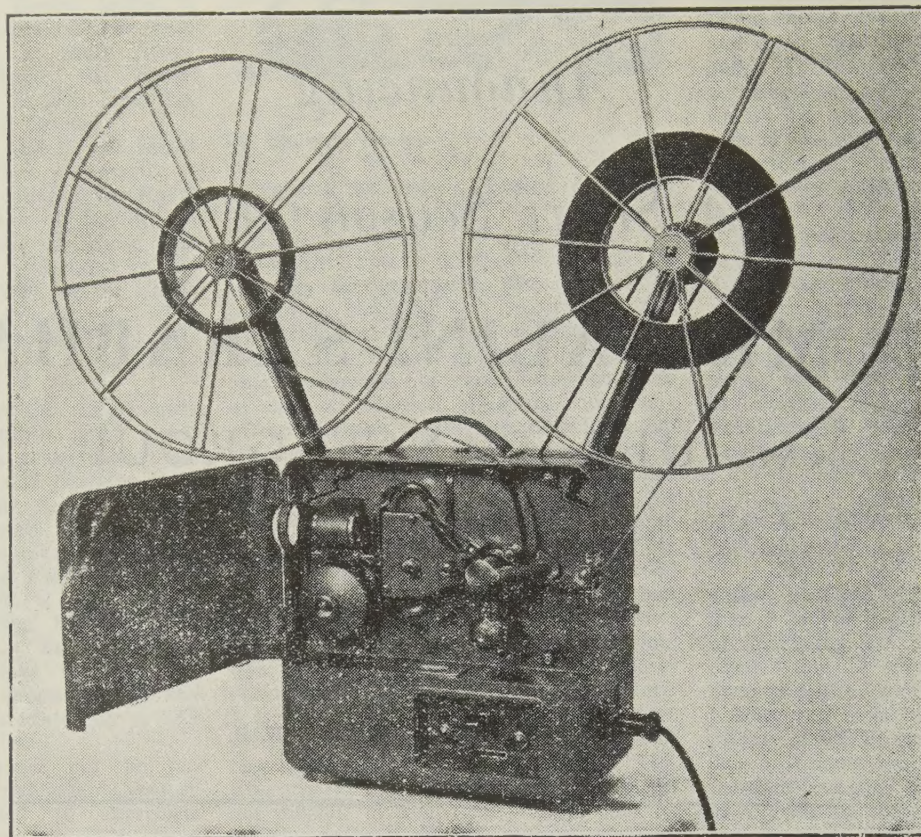
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